

THE ARGOSY.

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THE GREY MONK.

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DYKE."

CHAPTER XLIV.

BACK AT ST. OSWYTH'S

OUR lovers took a tender farewell of each other.

No other course had been open to Sir Gilbert than to assume that, after leaving the Chase, his son would book himself by an early steamer back to America. Should such prove to be the case, Lisle would be only a few days behind him. Everard calculated that if he were fortunate enough to light on "Mr. John Alexander" immediately after his arrival at Pineapple City, he might count upon being back at the Chase in a day or two under three weeks. He would write to Ethel as soon as he landed at New York, and again on reaching Pineapple City, but he would have to console himself as best he could without any news of, or from, her between the date of his departure and that of his return.

He left Mapleford at an early hour next morning, which was that of Friday. He had already settled in his mind to sail by the *Arbaces*, which was timed to leave Liverpool at noon on Saturday. Thus he had the whole intervening day to himself, and he determined to devote it to a purpose about which he said no word to anyone at the Chase—not even to Ethel.

He had been greatly struck with the story told him by Ethel that afternoon as they wandered together by the margin of the haunted pool, and since then he had thought about it much and often. It was a mystery the solution of which, as it seemed to him, would have to be sought for in the United States. It was from there Ethel had been brought as an infant, and it could scarcely be doubted that she had been born there. Now that he was bound for America on

another matter, he had made up his mind, before sailing, to run down to St. Oswyth's, interview the Miss Thursbys, and satisfy himself as to whether there was, or was not, a possibility of eliciting from them sufficient information to enable him to build up a case worth investigating whilst he was in the States.

Ethel had not failed to tell her aunts in her letters about her meeting with Everard Lisle, nor of her surprise at finding that he was in the service of Sir Gilbert Clare, who was none other than first cousin to Lady Pell, and thereafter his name found a mention in nearly all her letters. The sisters were glad that it should be so, and told themselves that it must be pleasant for Ethel to be associated with someone who came from St. Oswyth's, and that the two doubtless found many subjects in common to talk about. Not a suspicion of what was presently to happen ever found lodgment in their minds until Ethel informed them of her actual engagement, subject to their approval. It was a letter full of love and dutiful affection to the aunts, though every word proved that for all time she had given away her heart to Everard Lisle.

The important epistle was delivered at Rose Mount just as the sisters had finished breakfast, and was brought in by Tamsin when she came to clear the table. "From Miss Ethel," said the old woman as she laid it down in front of Miss Matilda, whose turn to enact the part of elder sister it happened to be. Ethel's letters always arrived about breakfast-time and were read aloud by one or other of the sisters, and, somehow, Tamsin generally contrived to be present at the reading—a privilege tacitly accorded her by her mistresses.

Miss Matilda, with characteristic precision, proceeded to slit open the envelope with the tiny pair of scissors which she always carried in a case in her pocket. Tamsin, with dilatory fingers, was removing the breakfast things one by one on to the tray which she had brought in with her.

Miss Matilda read the first few lines aloud, and then paused in a tremor of agitation. A low cry escaped from Miss Jane.

The sisters gazed at each other across the table, the same expression of consternation and distress on the faces of both. "Engaged to Everard Lisle! Oh! who would have thought it?" they exclaimed at the same moment, for not only their thoughts on any given subject, but very often the words by which they gave expression to them, were identical. Then for a minute or more both seemed unable to find another word to say.

"I should have thought," said Miss Matilda at length in her most dignified tone, in which there was yet an unwonted quaver, as she gave a tug at the little knitted shawl which she always wore at breakfast time: "I should have thought that, after the wretched experience Ethel went through so recently, she would have shunned the other sex most assiduously, if not for ever, in any case for a very long time to come."

Miss Matilda took up the letter again and read aloud to the end. Tamsin had transferred the breakfast things to her tray, and had deposited the latter on the side-board; she now proceeded to draw the cloth off the table and to slowly fold it. Not a word escaped her.

"I am afraid, sister, that we can but bow to the inevitable," said Miss Matilda with a sigh as she folded the letter. "It seems to me that we have no right, even if we had the will, to withhold our approval of the step she has chosen to take."

"My own view exactly," replied Miss Jane with a sorrowful shake of the head. "And yet—oh, dear!—we shall only have the dear girl back at home to lose her permanently after a little while. And I was looking forward—— Oh! I was looking forward to so many things."

And then before more could be said Tamsin's voice broke suddenly in. "And is it not a right and proper thing that Miss Ethel should marry and have a home of her own?" demanded the old woman in tones which had something of an injured ring in them. "Why should she not have a husband to love and cherish her—some good man to whose life she—in her turn—will be a blessing? Ay, and he is a good man, is Mr. Everard Lisle—very different from that other one! If some of us have missed it, is there any reason why we should begrudge it to her? I trow not, indeed—I trow not!"

She and her tray were gone before Miss Matilda had sufficiently recovered from her astonishment to find a word to say.

"Really, the way Tamsin presumes on our good nature and her own length of service is at times most trying. I am afraid that one of these days we shall be under the necessity of giving her notice." It was not the first time Miss Matilda had spoken to the same effect; but no one knew better than she how empty was the threat.

"It seems to me, sister," remarked Miss Jane timidly, "that we have been justly rebuked for our selfishness. We have been thinking more of our own loss than of the dear girl's happiness. That is not as it should be."

Miss Matilda did not answer for a little while. She seemed intent on tearing up the envelope of Ethel's letter into the tiniest of fragments. Then she said gently: "You are right, sister. It *is* the child's happiness that we ought to consider first of all. But"—with a sigh—"we are growing old, and the house will seem very lonely without her."

Then, somehow, tears sprang to the eyes of both, and for a little space they wept silently.

But there were no traces of tears in their eyes when, about four o'clock the same afternoon, just as they had agreed between themselves that if Ethel must marry, there was no one to whom they would sooner entrust her than to Everard Lisle, they were startled by seeing Lisle himself marching up the garden-path and making direct for the front door.

Nor were the sisters less surprised when he informed them of the special purpose which had brought him there. They willingly entered into all the details of the story which Ethel had told him, going over it with him step by step; but in the result he found that he had been unable to add anything of real consequence to that which he knew already.

One thing, however, they were in a position to give him, although he had his doubts as to its value, seeing that it bore date nineteen years back, and that was the address of Kirby Griggs, the lawyer's clerk, who had recognised the portrait of the self-styled Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane as that of his unmarried sister, Martha Griggs. Miss Matilda had found the address after her brother's death in his private memorandum book.

When, after Everard was gone, Tamsin took in the supper tray, she had to set her mouth hard in order to suppress the smile which would otherwise have puckered it. In place of the morning's agitations and tears, the sisters were now complacently discussing the important question of what material Ethel's wedding-dress should be made! "And now to come to the pecuniary part of the affair," said Miss Matilda. "I should not like our dear girl to go to her husband quite empty-handed."

"Certainly not, sister. The same thought has been in my own mind. I do not suppose that Mr. Lisle's position is a specially lucrative one."

"For my part, I should be quite willing to settle on Ethel my half-share of the rental of Vale View House, which, now that Mrs. Loftus has taken it on a seven years' lease, will be a sure source of income for that length of time."

"It would make me very happy to do the same with my half-share. Now that we have grown used to our humbler style of living, we really don't need the rent money. And in future there will be only our two selves, you know, sister."

"No, only our two selves," echoed Miss Matilda, sadly.

That night, when Tamsin went upstairs to her own room, she took out of a drawer her savings bank book and refreshed her memory as to the sum which stood there to her credit, and represented the savings of many laborious years. That sum she made up her mind should be very considerably depleted before she was much older. To what better use could she put the money than in buying a wedding-present for the child who had been, and would ever be, as dear to her rugged, but tender old heart as she could possibly be to the heart of Miss Matilda or Miss Jane!

CHAPTER XLV.

"COME BACK TO ME."

EVERARD left St. Oswyth's by the six o'clock train on Saturday morning. Four hours later he was in Liverpool. Taking a cab for himself and his portmanteau, he proceeded direct to the shipping office and there booked a berth on board the *Arbaces* for New York. Thence he was driven to the landing-stage, where he found the tender whose duty it was to transfer the passengers and their luggage on board the huge liner anchored out in mid-stream.

On reaching the *Arbaces* Lisle at once made his way to the state-room which had been allotted him. He knew already that he would have to share it with a fellow-passenger, and when, on entering it, he found there a dressing-case and a small portmanteau, a natural curiosity to ascertain the name of the person who, for the next week or more would be his nightly, if not his daily companion, led him to turn up one of the labels and read what was written thereon. Rarely, perhaps never, in his life had Everard Lisle been more amazed than he was when his eyes took in these words: "John Alexander, Esq. Passenger to New York." By one of those singular coincidences, which are far more common than the generality of people imagine them to be, he and the man of whom he was in pursuit, and on whom he had not expected to set eyes till after a journey of close upon four thousand miles, had crossed each other's path at the outset. Yet, but for the chance of his having read the address label when he did, they would probably have been shipmates for some time before discovering the relation in which each stood to the other, and, in any case, as the *Arbaces* did not call at Queenstown, they would have been compelled in their own despite to make the voyage out and home again.

Lisle had not recovered from his astonishment when the cabin door was opened from without and he saw before him a tall, finely-built man of middle age, with high aquiline features, dark, grave, earnest-looking eyes, a somewhat worn and thoughtful-looking face, and a long flowing beard already flecked with white.

"My cabin chum, I presume," said the stranger in a deep mellow voice, and with an exceedingly pleasant smile. "I hope we shall have a good passage, and that at the end of it our companionship will remain a pleasant recollection in connection with it."

Everard smiled and bowed. "I have taken the liberty of reading the name on your luggage," he said. "Pray excuse the question. I have a special reason for asking it, but are you Mr. John Alexander of Pineapple City in the State of Michigan?"

The other lifted his eyebrows in surprise. "That is certainly my address, and therefore I can only assume that I am the person to whom you refer."

"Then you must be the person whom I was going all the way to Pineapple City in search of. I am especially glad that I have met you now and here—for one thing, because my having done so will save me the necessity of a voyage to the States and back. Mr. Alexander, I am the bearer of a letter addressed to you from Sir Gilbert Clare of Withington Chase."

For a moment or two it seemed to Mr. Alexander as if the cabin floor were rising and sinking, as it might have done in a heavy gale. He seated himself on the edge of his berth; his face had faded to an ashen grey.

"A letter from my—from Sir Gilbert Clare for me!" he said, speaking like a man in a dream.

From the case which he carried in his breast pocket, Everard extracted Sir Gilbert's missive and handed it to the other. "I will see you again in the course of a few minutes," he said.

It will be enough to say that neither one nor the other sailed by the *Arbaces*, but caused themselves and their belongings to be transferred back to shore at the last moment.

A few hours later, as they sat together over their coffee and cigars in a private room of the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, John Alexander Clare proceeded to give his companion an outline of his history from the time of the explosion of the lake steamer by which he was supposed to have been killed. Of that narrative all that need be given here is such a summary as will enable the reader to follow the sequence of events, the outcome of which was the unpremeditated meeting of himself and Lisle on board the *Arbaces*.

As may perhaps be remembered, Mr. Travis, Alec's business partner, could not reasonably have come to any other conclusion than that the latter had lost his life by the explosion of the *Prairie Belle*, seeing that week after week passed over without bringing any tidings of him; and, indeed, it was not till nearly three months had gone by that one day a tall, emaciated, almost ghastly figure stalked into the office, and for the moment all but made Mr. Travis's hair stand on end when, in hollow tones, it said: "Well, Frank, old fellow, how are you by now?"

It appeared that he had been picked up, clinging to a spar and all but insensible, nearly an hour after the explosion had taken place. His rescuer, a farmer who lived on the margin of the lake, caused Alec to be taken to his house, where he was carefully nursed and tended by the farmer's wife and daughter. He had been terribly bruised and half blinded by the explosion, and for several weeks he wandered in his mind and knew neither where he was, nor what had befallen him.

The farmer and his family belonged to the sect known as Quietists, and as they read no newspapers and held as little communion with the outside world as possible, it followed that Alec's name was omitted from the published list of the survivors of the explosion.

Small wonder was it that Travis almost looked upon his partner as on one come back from the grave.

Not till then did Alec learn of the inquiries which had been made about him during his absence. That the man who made them had come specially from England, Mr. Travis did not doubt, but as he had declined to state the nature of his business, there was nothing more to tell. The fact interested Alec but faintly, and soon passed out of his thoughts. He was a banished man; his wife had deserted him; his child was dead; and to him, after his accident and the illness which resulted from it, his past life gradually assumed the faded proportions of a dream, and not a real experience of his own.

And so one uneventful year after another dragged out its little span, the partners meanwhile prospering in business, and never being other than the best of friends.

At length, through the death of a relative, Mr. Travis succeeded to a considerable property and at once made up his mind to return to England. Alec, who for some years past had been pining for news from home, and who could not but remember that his father was getting well advanced in years, begged of his friend, on his arrival in the old country, to go to Mapleford and make certain inquiries *sub rosa*, and communicate the result to him. This Mr. Travis at once proceeded to do, writing Alec to the effect that his step-mother and his three half-brothers had all been some years dead, that a tablet to his, Alec's memory had been put up in the church where so many of his progenitors were buried, that his son had been adopted by Sir Gilbert as the latter's heir, and that his wife, under the designation of Mrs. Alexander Clare, was residing at the house known as Maylings, within a mile of the Chase.

Alec was astounded. His child had been a girl, and he had still by him, carefully preserved, his wife's heartless letter and the certificate of the infant's death. The result of Mr. Travis's letter was that, three weeks later, Alec landed at Liverpool.

What followed is already known to the reader. Alec's reason for not denouncing Luigi to Sir Gilbert at an earlier date was owing to his wife's absence in Italy, of which he had learnt through certain inquiries made on his account by Martin Rigg. Before taking any positive steps in the affair he was desirous of obtaining some certain evidence as to how far Giovanna was implicated in the fraud, his intention being to seek an interview with her immediately upon her return. Rispani's attempt on the strong room had brought matters to a climax a little sooner than he had anticipated.

He had not failed to hear of Luigi's departure next day from the Chase, but although his mission was accomplished and there no longer existed any reason why he should not return to his far-away home, he stayed on day after day, unable to tear himself from the haunts of his youth and the roof-tree where he had been born. But at length he had made up his mind that the next day should be the

final one of his stay, and as the evening shadows closed in he had gone to take his last walk in the grounds and his last look at the old mansion. It was the evening on which Sir Gilbert, finding himself alone indoors owing to the absence of Lady Pell and the others on their expedition to Dunarvon Castle, had gone for a twilight stroll in the shrubbery. From the shelter of a bank of evergreens he had been watched by his son as he passed slowly to and fro on the sward, puffing absently at his cigar and buried deep in thought. Hence it had come to pass that Alec was within a dozen yards of him when, overcome by a sudden dizziness, he stumbled and sank to the ground. His son's strong arms had lifted him and carried him into the library by way of the French window. Then, after depositing him on a couch and pressing a kiss on his forehead, Alec had rung the bell and made a hurried exit by the way he had come.

Next morning he had decided to delay his departure till he should be able to ascertain whether his father was suffering from any after effects of the attack of the previous evening, but the sudden appearance of Sir Gilbert as he emerged from the spinney on his way to the Tower, to all appearance in his usual health, had at once dissipated his fears on that score. It was through an upper window of the Tower that he had seen his father's approach; then had come the latter's unanswered summons at the door, and after that his departure across the park in the direction of the lodge. Alec had rightly surmised that it was a wish to question Martin Rigg that had brought Sir Gilbert to the Tower, but he had of course no knowledge of the motives which had prompted the visit. The same evening, a couple of hours after nightfall, he had emerged from the Tower, and after locking the door and depositing the key in a place where Rigg on his return would know where to look for it, he had crossed the park, no longer wearing the robe and cowl of the Grey Monk, but in his ordinary attire, and after walking to Westwood station, four miles away, had taken the train for London. After a brief stay in town, where nobody recognised him, and where he made no effort to seek out any of his old-time friends or acquaintances, he had journeyed to Liverpool and booked himself as a passenger by the *Arbaces*.

It is not difficult to imagine with what absorbed interest Everard Lisle listened to the narrative of Alec Clare. There still remained one point, and others would doubtless crop up later on, as to which his curiosity was unsatisfied. "Now that you have told me so much, Mr. Clare," he said presently, "perhaps you won't mind enlightening me as to the means by which you were enabled to make your way into and out of the Chase, as it seemed, whenever you chose to do so, without anyone being a bit the wiser."

Alec laughed. "The explanation is a very simple one, or so it will seem when you hear it," he said. "The room which used to be my mother's boudoir, and which has latterly, I believe, been assigned to Lady Pell, has two windows, both of which were originally

of the long, narrow, old-fashioned kind, but one of which, at my mother's desire, was modernised into what is called a French window, so that she might have a means of ready access to the garden—for she was somewhat of an invalid—without having to go round by the corridor and the side door. The other window was left untouched and, to all appearance, was not intended to open in any way. But one day, when a lad of ten, I lighted, quite by accident, on a secret spring which, when pressed in a particular way, caused the window to turn bodily on a swivel. Through the aperture thus formed any ordinary sized person could squeeze himself without much difficulty. I kept my discovery to myself, finding it useful on several occasions, when I was a rackets young fellow home for my holidays. To what use I put it of late you will have guessed already."

Next morning Alec Clare set out on his journey back to Withington Chase. As a rule he was much averse to Sunday travelling, but the present occasion was an altogether exceptional one. He already felt like another man. The ban which had been laid on him more than a score years before had at length been taken off. His father had written, "Come back to me—I want you." The long breach was about to be healed. All was to be forgiven and forgotten. Not as a lonely childless old man would his father henceforth drag out his days. And when he thought of what he himself was going back to, his heart felt full to the point of overflowing with deep thankfulness and that sort of chastened elation which, in the case of those who have seen much tribulation and are imbued with a sense of the unstableness of things mundane, often is all they dare permit themselves to feel.

Everard in the course of the previous afternoon had despatched a telegram to Sir Gilbert, informing him that he had overtaken "Mr. Alexander" before the latter had sailed, and that he, the aforesaid Mr. A., might be looked for at the Chase in the course of the afternoon of the morrow.

He further wrote a brief note to the Baronet informing him that he was called to London by some special private business, and that he had taken the liberty of claiming a couple of days' release from his duties at the Chase.

Everard's telegram arrived at the Chase while Sir Gilbert was at dinner. When he had read it he passed it to Lady Pell, who, as soon as she had taken in the message, gave it back to him with a look that was more expressive than words. Then he got up and left the room. He felt that he could not have spoken without breaking down. An hour later her ladyship went in search of him and found him in his study, seated by the fire with the telegram clasped tightly in his fingers. "May I come in?" she asked, standing with the handle of the open door in her hand.

"To be sure, Louisa. I am glad you have come. You are the only person who can understand what I feel without my needing to

say a word about it. Even now I can scarcely believe that in a few short hours I shall see my boy and hold his hand in mine. Not till death steps in between us, Louisa, shall anything part us again!"

It was Lady Pell who, next afternoon, met Alec at the railway station. Sir Gilbert would not trust himself to go. He was afraid that his emotion would overpower him, and he was nervously shy of making a scene in public. Nor was he at the door to welcome his son when the latter alighted at the Chase, but Lady Pell's instinct told her where to look for him. "Come with me," she said to Alec, and with that she led the way to the study. On reaching it she opened the door and motioned him to enter. Sir Gilbert, his tall, gaunt figure drawn to its fullest height, was standing on the hearth-rug, supporting himself with one hand on the chimney-piece, his face turned expectantly towards the door. He was trembling in every limb, and as Alec went quickly forward he put forth his arms and made a faltering step or two to meet him. "Oh, my son—my son!" he cried, his voice breaking into a sob as the last words left his lips.

Lady Pell gently closed the door and left them together.

CHAPTER XLVI.

UNKNITTED THREADS.

EVERARD LISLE stayed in Liverpool till Monday, on which day he took an early train up to town. His object in going to London was to endeavour by means of the address which Miss Matilda had given him to trace the present whereabouts—if he were still alive—of the man Kirby Griggs. Futile as the hope seemed that, even if he should succeed in finding him, Griggs would be able to supply him with any information that would further in the slightest degree the special purpose he had in view, he yet felt that he could not rest satisfied till he had interviewed him and heard from his own lips all that he had to tell.

The address supplied him was that of a firm of lawyers in Gray's Inn Square, in whose employ Kirby Griggs had been at the date of his interview with Mr. Matthew Thursby.

Fortunately for Everard's purpose, Griggs proved not only to be alive, but still in the service of the same firm—a third-rate clerk on a very limited salary. He was a thin, timid, nervous man, with an anxious, hungry sort of look, as though he rarely had as much to eat as he could have done with. When told the reason which had induced Everard to seek him out, he at once expressed his willingness to give him all the information that lay in his power; but as he was too busy to do so during office hours, he requested Everard to call upon him

between seven and eight o'clock the same evening at an address in the suburbs which he gave him.

There Lisle found himself at half-past seven and was at once ushered into the clerk's little parlour, in which sacred apartment—hardly ever entered between one Sunday and another—a fire had this evening been lighted in honour of his visit.

There proved to be no reticence on Griggs' part in discussing in all its bearings that strange episode of twenty years before, in which his sister had played so inexplicable and, ultimately, so tragical a part.

It appeared that she had always been of a romantic and flighty turn of mind, and an insatiable devourer of impossible romances and outrageous love-stories of the very commonest type of penny fiction. She had gone out to the States as maid to a wealthy elderly lady who had died there shortly after her arrival. The next news from Martha had been to the effect that she was on the eve of returning to England by the clipper-ship *Pandora*, and her brother was requested to meet the vessel on its arrival in dock. Why she had booked herself under the fantastical name of Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane her brother could not imagine, unless it were a name she had picked up in the course of her reading, and had taken a fancy to. Just as little could he understand why, in the presumed state of her finances, she should have chosen to travel as a saloon passenger. As for whence and from whom his sister had obtained the child which she had passed off on board ship as her own, and what possible object she could have had in view in perpetrating such a hoax—if hoax it could be called—was to Kirby Griggs still as much an enigma as it had been at the time; nothing had occurred in the interim to throw even the faintest ray of light on the affair.

Everard's heart sank within him. It was evident that the lawyer's clerk had nothing of consequence to relate beyond what was known to him already.

After musing awhile, he said: "I presume that nothing was found among your sister's luggage—no letters, or papers, or anything else which, if placed in the hands of anyone who was willing to devote both time and patience to following it up, might ultimately furnish a clue to the mystery we have just been discussing."

"There was nothing—nothing whatever found of the kind you mention," replied Griggs with a shake of the head. Then, after a pause, he gave a little deprecatory cough and added: "As I have no wish to hide anything in connection with the affair, it may perhaps be as well to mention that my sister's boxes contained a quantity of wearing apparel such as seemed, both to me and my wife, far above her station in life, and the only conclusion we could come to was, that it had most likely been a present to her from the lady who had died. After keeping it for three or four years in case any inquiry should be made about it, my wife gradually used it up in the manufacture of garments for our numerous olive branches."

Although Mrs. Griggs made a third at the interview, as yet she had not spoken more than a dozen words, but in the pause that now ensued she suddenly said: "The ring, Kirby—have you forgotten the ring? That might perhaps supply the gentleman with the clue he is looking for."

Griggs started, and his pale face took on an unwonted blush. "I had indeed forgotten the ring," he said, "but that it will in any way help to clear up the affair, I don't for one moment believe." Then turning to Everard, he added: "The ring to which my wife refers is a quite plain hoop of gold, in fact, just like a wedding-ring, except that it is about four times as massive. It was the only article of jewellery found among my sister's luggage, although she was said to have been wearing a gold watch and chain and several dress rings at the time she fell overboard. Unfortunately, about four years ago I was very much pressed for money and was compelled to put the ring in pledge, obtaining on it an advance of thirty shillings. I am sorry to say that I have never since been in a position to redeem it, but it has not been lost, because I have been careful to pay the interest as it fell due."

"As you say," replied Everard, "there is not much likelihood of a ring such as you describe this one as being helping me in any way to discover what I am in search of. Still, I should very much like to see and examine it, and if you will allow me to pay the cost of taking it out of pledge I shall be greatly obliged to you."

"Truth to tell, sir," answered Griggs with a shrug, "I haven't money enough of my own to spare to enable me to do so. But in any case, nothing can be done in the matter till to-morrow."

So Everard left money for the redemption of the ring and went his way.

At half-past seven the next evening he was again at the house of Kirby Griggs. The ring had been redeemed in the interim. It was what the lawyer's clerk had described it as being, a plain massive hoop of gold, but on the inner side Lisle's keen eyes detected what seemed to him like a faint tracery of some kind, but apparently so worn that without the help of a magnifying glass it was impossible to make out what it was intended to represent. Griggs, who admitted that he had noticed the marks, but without attaching any value to them, volunteered to obtain the loan of a lens from a working watchmaker who lived close by, and accordingly did so. With the aid of the lens and the exercise of some patience, Everard was enabled to make out that what to the naked eye had looked like so many meaningless scratches was in reality an engraved inscription which ran thus: "J. A. C. to G. R. *Pour tout temps.*"

Scarcely had he succeeded in deciphering the inscription before it flashed across him that the words, "*Pour tout temps*" formed the somewhat arrogant motto of the Clares of Withington Chase, as also that the letters J. A. C. were the initials of John Alexander Clare.

By the time he got away from the house, taking the ring with him, it was too late to think of going down to the Chase before next morning. So he wandered about some of the quieter streets till a late hour, turning over and over in his mind his discovery in connection with the ring, but nowhere finding an adequate solution of the singular problem which was thus put before him. From whichever point of view he looked at the matter, it still remained as much a tangle as at first. Out of a dozen questions which he asked himself, there was not one he could answer. He turned into his hotel a little before midnight and went to bed, but sleep came to him only by fits and starts, and all through the dark hours the same series of questions kept ringing their changes in his brain.

After an early breakfast he caught the eight-thirty train for Mapleford. A fly took him and his luggage from the station to Elm Lodge, from whence, a few minutes later, he walked across the park to the Chase.

Sir Gilbert had lingered over breakfast, talking to his son, and in the corridor Everard met him face to face, looking a dozen years younger than when he had seen him last. The change in him was indeed marvellous.

"What! back already?" he said beamingly. "I thought you were going to take a few days' holiday in London. Why didn't you, eh? Why didn't you? But we'll have no work to-day, that's certain. The best thing you can do will be to have the dog-cart out after luncheon and take your sweetheart for a drive—lucky dog that you are, to have won the love of such a girl!" Then his voice took on a deeper tone. "What a happy chance for me was that which brought you and my son together at Liverpool and so gave Alec back to me weeks before I should otherwise have had him! I cannot help feeling as if I somehow owe it all to you. Well, well"—laying a kindly hand on his shoulder—"when your wedding-day is here you will find that I have not forgotten you." And with a smile and a nod he passed on.

Everard's most pressing object was to secure a private interview with Mr. John Clare—as he was henceforward to be known to the world, although to his father he would never be anything but Alec. Not till he should have recounted to the latter the history of the ring and put it into his hands, would he go in search of Ethel and surprise her by his unexpected return.

Presently he found John alone in the library, hunting up some of the favourite authors of his youth, from whom he felt that he had been too long parted. Sir Gilbert was closeted with one of his tenants in the study.

John Clare greeted Everard with a smile and a cordial grip of the hand. The liking he had conceived for him during the few hours they had spent together in Liverpool had not been, in any degree lessened by what he had heard about him since, both from his father and Lady Pell.

"I thought you were about to give yourself a holiday," he said, "and that we need not look to see you at the Chase for some days to come." He had already had his grizzled beard and heavy moustache carefully trimmed, and certainly he presented a much more civilised appearance than before.

"I was able to finish the business which took me to London in much less time than I expected," replied Everard. "The affair, however, has taken a turn wholly surprising and unexpected—one that seems to bring you, Mr. Clare, into connection with it, although as to the mode in which the connection in question originated I must confess that I am entirely in the dark."

"You excite my curiosity, Lisle. I hope you will not refuse to gratify it."

"Is there any place where we can secure half-an-hour to ourselves without fear of interruption?"

"Perhaps we had better go upstairs to my own room. No one will intrude upon us there."

"May I take the liberty of asking whether you have ever seen this ring before?" said Everard as soon as the two were seated opposite each other in John's dressing-room.

John took the ring and looked at it for a moment or two, as one in doubt. Then all at once a flash of recognition leapt into his eyes and every nerve in his body responded with a thrill. "Yes, I *have* seen this ring before—many years ago," he said slowly. "Have you any objection to telling me by what strange chance it came into your possession?"

"It was with that purpose I sought this interview. But the story is a long one, and at the beginning will doubtless seem irrelevant to the question you have just put to me."

"You shall tell it in your way. So long as the end of it furnishes me with an answer to my question I shall be satisfied."

"Some nineteen years ago," began Everard presently, "a certain clipper ship named the *Pandora* left New York for London having on board a number of passengers, [among them being a certain Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane (that being the name by which she had booked herself), who, although she was dressed as a lady and wore a quantity of jewellery, had neither the manners nor the appearance of one. With her she had a child, a little girl only a few months old, to attend upon whom during the voyage, her own nursemaid having deserted her in New York—so her story ran—she engaged a woman from among the steerage passengers. Unfortunately, one dark night, Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane fell overboard and was lost.

"Among other passengers on the *Pandora* were two maiden ladies, sisters, of the name of Thursby, who, together with their brother, an elderly bachelor, were returning home after a brief visit to the States. The forlorn condition of the lost woman's infant touched the kind hearts [of the sisters, and they made it their business to look after

the child's welfare during the remainder of the voyage, naturally expecting that some relations of its mother would be there to meet the ship on its arrival in dock. However, there proved to be no one there to inquire for Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane, but, instead, a lawyer's clerk of the name of Griggs, who had come to meet his sister, the latter having written to inform him that she would take passage by the *Pandora*. Well, in a photograph of the so-called Mrs. Vane the clerk at once recognised his unmarried sister Martha, who had gone out to the States a few months before in the position of lady's-maid. There could be no possible mistake about the photograph. The captain and the whole of the cabin passengers were prepared to affirm that it was a likeness of Mrs. Vane, who had fallen overboard, while Griggs was prepared to swear an affidavit that it was the likeness of his sister. The poor man was terribly puzzled, as well he might be. He could not in the least comprehend why his sister had chosen to call herself Mrs. Vane—whence she had obtained the fine clothes and the jewellery in which she had flaunted on board ship—and, above all, what possible object she could have had in passing off the child of some one else as her own offspring. In the result, he declined to have anything whatever to do with the child, whom he left on the hands of Mr. Matthew Thursby and his sisters to be dealt with in whatever way they might choose.

"What the Miss Thursbys chose to do, was to adopt the child and bring her up as their niece. As such she grew up, never suspecting that the sisters were other than her aunts in reality, and not till her nineteenth birthday, when a letter was put into her hands addressed to her by Mr. Matthew Thursby, who had died many years before, with instructions that it should be read by her on that day—were the facts of her early history, so far as they were known, revealed to her. That the revelation was a great shock to her cannot be doubted, but it made no difference whatever in the relations which had subsisted for so long a time between herself and the sisters. The secret was still kept to themselves, and to this day, the waif of the *Pandora* passes as the niece of the two Miss Thursbys. A little later she became companion, *pro tem.*, to Lady Pell, and accompanied the latter on her visit to Withington Chase. Doubtless you have already met Miss Thursby at luncheon and dinner, and so on, Mr. Clare."

"I have both met and noticed the young lady; indeed, when she and I are at table I find it difficult to take my eyes off her. She affects me in quite a singular way, the like of which I never experienced before. But that is not to the point just now. Pray proceed."

"The next fact needful for me to mention as bearing on my narrative—in what way you will presently understand—is, that Miss Ethel Thursby and I are engaged to be married." He spoke with a heightened colour and an added sparkle in his eyes.

"Ah! is that indeed so? I congratulate you with all my heart, Lisle."

"When, a few days ago," resumed Everard, "Sir Gilbert Clare placed in my hands a letter addressed to you at Pineapple City, with a request that I would at once proceed to America, search you out and give it into your hands, finding myself with a day to spare prior to the sailing of the steamer, I journeyed down to St. Oswyth's, where the Misses Thursby reside, with the object of putting certain questions to them. It seemed to me that there was just a faint chance that, while in the United States, I might be able, as a consequence of the inquiries I intended to set on foot there, to find the clue to the mystery surrounding the birth and parentage of her whom I hope shortly to call my wife; but I was desirous, first of all, to make myself thoroughly acquainted with every feature of the affair that had come under the cognisance of the sisters. As it fell out, however, they had nothing of any consequence to tell me which I did not know already. The only scrap of fresh evidence I brought away with me was the address of the man Griggs, who, in the portrait of Mrs. Vane, had recognised his sister. You know already, why I never got any farther than Liverpool on my way to the States. After parting from you, I went to London and was fortunate enough to find Griggs without difficulty; but, as in the case of the sisters, he had nothing to tell me which would in the least help to further the end I had in view. I was on the point of giving up the whole business in despair, when Mrs. Griggs happened to mention that among the luggage which had been claimed by the lawyer's clerk as his sister's property, there had been found a plain gold ring of very massive make. On expressing my desire to see the ring, I was told that circumstances had compelled Griggs to pledge it. But the following day saw it redeemed and placed in my hands. Perceiving that the inner side bore an inscription of some kind, I procured a lens and by its means was enabled to make out that part of the lettering represented the motto of the Clares of Withington Chase, and another part your own initials. Hence my reason for bringing the ring to you."

"I am glad, Lisle—very glad indeed that you have done so. For the present I will ask you to say nothing to anyone about what has passed between us this morning. You know, of course, that the Mrs. Clare who occupied Maylings for a short time was my wife?"

"She was known to everyone in the neighbourhood as Sir Gilbert's daughter-in-law."

"Can you tell me where to find her? It is requisite that I should see her with as little delay as possible."

"I have no knowledge of Mrs. Clare's movements; but her nephew, Luigi Rispani, left me an address at which a letter or message would at any time find him. It would be no trouble to me to run up to

town by the next train, hunt up Rispani, and obtain from him the address of Mrs. Clare, with which he is pretty sure to be acquainted."

"If you will do that for me, Lisle, I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

"I will start at once. There is a train at twelve-thirty. If I have good luck, I ought to be back by seven o'clock."

John Clare held out his hand. "Bring me the address at any cost," he said.

The ring thus strangely recovered had been a present from him to Giovanna Rispani during the period of their brief courtship.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

To John Clare's wife the world of late had become a greatly-changed place. She was alone in London, without a single creature of her own sex whom she could call an acquaintance, much less a friend. She had broken both with her uncle and Luigi. For the latter she had never cared. He had impressed her from the first as being not only morally unscrupulous—that was a defect which she might not have experienced much difficulty in condoning—but as being sly and deceitful into the bargain, and, in short, one of those people who are almost as dangerous to, and as little to be trusted by, those whom they call their friends as by those to whom they owe a grudge which they would gladly wipe off.

Captain Verinder she had learnt to like after a fashion. He was her mother's brother, and that of itself was enough to create a tie between them which, under ordinary circumstances, she would have been one of the last people to ignore. She had liked him for his *bonhomie*, for his persistent good-humour and his half-quizzical, half-cynical way of looking at men and things, and last, but not least, for the frequent doses of flattery he had been in the habit of administering to her, which, even while conscious that it was nothing more than flattery, had possessed the delightful property of raising her in her own estimation, and of causing her to think more highly of herself than she had ever done before.

But this was a state of things which had now come wholly to an end. Giovanna's feelings were very bitter against her uncle. She blamed him and him alone for everything that had happened to her; at his door she laid the entire load of her misfortunes.

It was quite true—and the fact was never lost sight of by her, for she rarely argued crookedly, as Luigi habitually did—that, but for the interest taken by Verinder in her case, in all probability she would

never have become aware that she was daughter-in-law to Sir Gilbert Clare. Yet, granting that point to the full, it was impossible for her to forget that it was wholly owing to his influence and persuasions that she had been lured into that career of fraud and double-dealing which, in her case, had ended in irremediable disaster. From her present knowledge of Sir Gilbert Clare she felt convinced that, had she have gone to him at first, as she had proposed to do, and told him the simple truth, far from turning his back upon her, he would have welcomed her as his son's widow, and have settled on her a liberal allowance, which would have been hers to the last day of her life. It made her hate her uncle when she thought of all that she had lost through weakly yielding to the glittering temptation he had so persistently dangled before her. Little by little she had wormed out of Luigi all the particulars of the Brussels episode, and she rightly argued that if Verinder had never introduced his nephew to the gaming-table the series of unfortunate events which resulted therefrom, and culminated in the discovery of Luigi in the strong-room, would never have come to pass. It was clearly the Captain and he alone who was to blame.

He had called upon her twice since their return to town, but her reception of him had been of the coldest; and when, on the occasion of his second visit, his request for a trifling loan of ten pounds was met by a distinct refusal, he perceived that his wisest course would be to keep away from his niece till time should in some measure have softened her rancour against him.

Giovanna had found a temporary home in one of those boarding-houses which abound in the neighbourhood of the west-central squares. But already she had begun to meditate a change. The demands on her purse were too many and, as it seemed to her, too exorbitant. Should she decide to stay in London, she must find cheaper rooms and make up her mind to live more economically in many ways. But just then she could not make up her mind to anything. She was a very lonely and a very miserable woman; indeed, the loneliness of her life sometimes appalled her. There were a number of other boarders in the house, and in the general drawing-room of an evening there was no lack of company of both sexes and of nearly all ages. But Giovanna, who had always been of a reserved and retiring disposition, had an utter distaste for associating with a mixed lot of people, with not one of whom she had anything in common, and, as soon as dinner was over, invariably went upstairs to her own sitting-room on the third floor. In the forenoons, when the weather was fine, she took long, solitary walks, sometimes in the Regent's Park, sometimes through the miles of West End shops, but rarely pausing to glance into a window. Invariably dressed in black, and with the upper half of her face closely veiled, but leaving visible the firm and beautiful contours of the mouth and chin, her tall and stately form drew many eyes to it as she slowly threaded her way through the crowd of promenaders, so

obviously indifferent to everyone and everything around her. There was about her, or so it seemed, an air of mystery, of romance even, which many of those who turned to gaze after her would have given something to be able to penetrate.

On a certain morning, just as Giovanna was getting ready to go for her usual walk, a message was brought her that there was a gentleman below who was desirous of seeing her. In the belief that it must be either her uncle or Luigi, they being the only visitors she had, she requested the servant to show him upstairs.

A minute later John Clare walked into the room.

Despite the changes which years had wrought in him, Giovanna knew him again the moment she set eyes on him, and the same instant a great fear took possession of her. An inarticulate cry broke from her lips; she shrank away from him with averting hands and terror-fraught eyes, and, when she could go no farther, she crouched trembling in a corner of the room. Her face wore the ghastly hue of death. She had never fainted in her life, and she did not now; but all the fibres of her being were stretched to that point of tension which touches the verge of madness. A little more and her brain would have given way. It was a strange mixture of terror that held her powerless, for, although she had at once recognised that this was no shadowy visitant from the tomb, there was about the affair an undoubted element of the supernatural. That her husband had come in the guise of an avenger one glance at his face had been enough to tell her, and surely it could be nothing less than a miracle which had brought him back to life! To Giovanna miracles were far from being the impossibilities which many of us deem them to be. She had grown up in an atmosphere of superstition, and not all the experience of after-life had quite served to eradicate the noxious weeds thus early implanted within her.

In the look with which John Clare regarded his wife there was an icy sternness such as might well strike with dread the heart of the unhappy woman. At that moment he bore a striking resemblance to his father, as Sir Gilbert had been before years and trouble had broken him down. For some moments he confronted his wife in silence as she cowered before him like some hunted creature driven to bay.

"At last we meet again!" he said, after a time. "You believed that I had died long years ago, but I am here, a living proof to the contrary. From me you have nothing to fear. I come neither to accuse nor to condemn. As you have dealt with the past, so will it deal with you; but certainly it is not for a fallible being such as I to set myself up as your judge."

He spoke slowly and unemotionally, without a trace of passion or the faintest tinge of invective.

"I am here on purpose to ask you certain questions," he resumed,

"which I can but trust that you will answer truthfully and to the best of your ability. Will you not be seated?"

She did not answer him in words, but drew herself together as it were, and crossing to the opposite side of the room sat down. By this she had recovered from her fright, and her features had settled into a sort of stony hardness which effectually masked whatever emotions might be at work below.

John too sat down, but there was nearly the entire width of the room between them.

"I want you," he went on, "to carry your mind back to that letter, written by you nearly twenty years ago, in which you told me that our child was dead, that you had come to the conclusion you and I would be happier apart, and that you were on the eve of returning to your friends in Italy. You have not forgotten the letter of which I speak?"

"I have not forgotten it."

"After you had left Barrytown and started on your journey, what happened to you? Did you go direct to New York and at once take ship there?"

"I went direct to New York, but a few hours before the vessel sailed by which I had booked my passage I was seized with a fever and conveyed to a hospital, where I lay for weeks, part of the time out of my mind, and the other part so weak that speech was an impossibility."

"And when you came back to health and strength, it was to find that while you had been in the hospital your maid, a woman of the name of Martha Griggs, had absconded with all your belongings."

It was a bold guess on John Clare's part, but it told.

Giovanna half started to her feet and then sat down again. The mask of apathy fell from her face and a great wonder and curiosity took the place of it. "How did you discover that?" she gasped.

"I have discovered more than that," was John's unmoved reply.

"And the woman—Martha Griggs—is she still living? do you know where to find her?" demanded Giovanna with an eagerness she made no attempt to conceal.

"Martha Griggs was lost overboard on the voyage between New York and London."

"Lost overboard! And my child—what became of her?" She had again risen. Voice, eyes, hands—all asked the question.

On the instant a great light of gladness, the source of which Giovanna was at a loss to comprehend, flamed out of John Clare's eyes.

"So I have surprised your secret, have I?" he said, speaking very slowly.

For a few seconds she stared at him with bewildered eyes; then the truth dawned on her.

"Yes," she replied, "you have surprised my secret, if that is the way you choose to put it. But the child——"

"A child no longer, is alive and well, and at the present moment under her grandfather's roof at Withington Chase."

"At Withington Chase—she! How strange! How wonderful! But I am very glad—oh yes, you may believe me when I tell you that I am very glad! For, whatever you may think, I am not all bad." She crossed quickly to the window and stood there with her back towards him for fully three minutes.

Not till she had resumed her seat did John Clare speak again.

"What you wrote me about the child was a lie?" he said presently. It might be taken either as a question or an assertion.

"Yes—a lie," she replied with a little shrug. "It is as well at times to call things by their right names."

"And the certificate you sent me?"

"A forgery. Five dollars was the price I paid for it."

"But what was your object, if I may ask, or what was to be gained by inducing me to believe that the child was dead?"

"After I had made up my mind to leave you and go back to Italy, my one fear was that you would come after me and rob me of the child. To keep you from doing that I invented the story of its death. Myself alone, after the letter I had written you, I knew you would not trouble yourself to come after."

"Never was there a more heartless and cruel fraud perpetrated on anyone!" For the first time his voice vibrated with a suppressed emotion. Not for a little while would he trust himself to say more. Giovanna's only reply was a slight lifting of her brows.

"When you grew better and left the hospital did you make no effort to recover your child?" demanded John as soon as he felt that he could command himself sufficiently to speak again.

"I made every effort a woman in my position could make. You must remember that I had been robbed of money, clothes, everything. I was utterly destitute. Some charitable people interested themselves in my case and the police were communicated with, but nothing came of their inquiries. Then a wild notion took hold of me that the woman, in the belief that I was past recovery, might have made her way to Italy with the child, and that I should find it under my father's roof when I got back to Catanzaro. The same charitable people found me enough money to take me home; but as you know, neither the woman nor my child was there. After that, rather than be called upon to tell and tell again the history of that time, I preferred to give it out that my child was dead. To my father alone was the truth known."

She ceased, and to John Clare it seemed that there was nothing more to be said. He had learnt all that he had come to learn. The missing links had been found; not one was wanting; the chain was complete.

"There is no reason why I should intrude myself any longer upon you," he said as he rose and pushed back his chair. "You have been frankness itself with me, and so far I thank you. I know not what your pecuniary resources are, nor do I seek to know, but I do not forget that you are still my wife and that, as such, a monetary arrangement of some kind will have to be come to with you. I will take my father's opinion in the matter, and in the course of a few days my lawyer shall be instructed to communicate with you."

"And my child—the child of whom I was robbed!" It was like the cry of some animal despoiled of its young made articulate.

She had started to her feet as it broke from her lips, and she now confronted him with heaving bosom and extended hands, her face marble-white and her great black eyes glowing with intense fire.

John had taken up his hat and had reached the door, when her cry caused him to turn.

"*Your* child!" he said with a quiet concentrated scorn that made each word seem a stab. "*My* child, you mean. You long ago forfeited all right to call her yours. What! would you dare to stain her spotlessness with your guilt? Would you, with such a past as yours, dare to claim her for your daughter, and look to her to call you mother? Is it your wish that she should be told the story of your life? Or would you prefer to pose before her as the innocent victim of circumstances which you could not control? No, I will not believe you are quite so depraved as that. As you cannot but know, her way and yours lie wide apart. You did your utmost to rob me of her when she was a child, and now that I have found her she belongs to me alone."

As he went out and shut the door behind him, all the strength seemed to go out of Giovanna's limbs. She sank to the floor and there crouched with clasped hands and bowed head. "He is right—he is right," she moaned. "I am not fit to tie the latches of her shoes."

(To be concluded.)



FRIENDSHIP — "HEAVEN DESCENDED."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "GENTLEMAN STEPHENS," ETC.

THE subject of friendship must be approached with faith. Those who go crusading in its cause must not look for support to the "negative" characters with which this world abounds, but to the much-believing, which by no means implies, Seek for them among the fools. Since human nature is a mixture of good and evil, it is no fool's maxim to trust in the stronger influence and final triumph of the stronger power; and to such as are believers in its divine origin, there is an excelsior in this view which refuses any limits to hope as to the destiny of humanity.

Faith in human nature once conceded and it follows that the much-believing will be not only friend, in the Good Samaritan sense, to every beggar, stranger, culprit, rival and foe whom he meets, but a man of many actual friendships; and these will probably number many "curiosities" among them. In youth he will be drawn to some "Matthew, seventy-two"; in age to many of that band of juniors who hold in their turn the forefront of life's stage.

He must be prepared for sneer of shallowness, self-interest, and love of popularity. The hare with the many friends is not as extinct as the mammoth, and there are veneerings everywhere; but every virtue runs into some excess, where it becomes a vice, and the much-believing is not likely to steer his course by so fickle a star as public opinion.

One of the benefits of a large circle of friends, besides preserving us from narrowness, is that it brings into play sides of our character often unrecognised by those with whom we live, and which may be a revelation even to ourselves. Once see in another that *something* not to be put into words which makes friendship possible, and we may be sure in the end it will justify itself.

But with one individual we may agree so vitally on one important subject as to afford to be wide as the poles on numberless lesser points; while with another, harmony on the oft-recurring trivialities of life make it possible to differ without loss of love on some fundamental question. We may be mentor to one friend and pupil to another and age have nothing to say in the matter; in some friendships the intellectual side will be the chief meeting-ground, and a very pleasant one too: in others it will be set aside for the secondary thing it is, and our more spiritual selves, or some practical or domestic edition of the same, rule the intercourse. Yet we may truly sign our autographs to all these selves, and many more; and while some friendships clasp hands at a midnight hour of bereavement, the first link with others as real may be rather one of laughter.

There is refreshment in the company of one whose lot is no

reproduction of our own; one can get so mortally weary of oneself, even in the newest dress, in the nauseating excess of a many-mirrored room. Diversity, indeed, will often give to friendship usefulness as well as piquancy, like the union of knife and fork, without which dinner were at a standstill.

Yet it by no means follows one can play knife to every fork one meets. With some excellently-formed forks, whose lion-mark too proclaims them silver, one seems to turn to salt-spoon instead, or asparagus-tongs, or nut-cracker. But when one has been floundering at a disadvantage in either of these guises, getting through little work, and that ill done, it is a joyful moment—a moment of champagne and laughing-gas—to find oneself once more a genuine knife in presence of some fork that restores us to activity and ease!

Warning voices are often raised against the perils of idealising, yet it means prophecy far oftener than shipwreck, and is, at worst, a far nobler error than detraction. To be pictured by some generous heart beyond our deserts, as being what we only long to be, is one of the best lessons in humility, as well as incentives to soul progress.

"We in dark dreams are tossing to and fro,
Pine with regret, or sicken with despair;
The while she bathes us in her own chaste glow,
And with our memory wings her own fond prayer."

Surely, therefore, it is well to be idealisers of others, clear-sighted to that best of them that shall survive the ages. Sleary, the manager's appeal—Sleary, of 'Hard Times' memory—"Make the betht of uth, Thquire, and not the wortht of uth," has a sound principle to back it, like so much of the kindly philosophy of Dickens' matchless pen. Michael Angelo not only saw the angel in the unhewn marble, but won it forth. Prophecy and fulfilment alike possible to that great nature; nay, possible to us, too, and an obligation laid on everyone, so that when in Heaven the full vision bursts on us of what some now-erring soul can come to, we may not be shamed to think we failed to recognise any of its features while in their imperfection here, or, alas, hindered their development by our cold disbelief and blame.

But to return to idealising; and it is a task easy of fulfilment towards those "best friends," who sit on the Treasury benches of our affections. The genuine friend, like Fox of the Martyrs, "Scorns the praise of impartiality." If the first two lines of Longfellow's verses do not apply to all cases, the remainder can and does in the spirit to all friendships that transcend the ordinary.

"Perhaps on earth I never shall behold,
With eye of sense, your outward form and semblance;
Therefore to me ye never will grow old,
But live for ever young in my remembrance.
Never grow old, nor change, nor pass away!
Your gentle voice will flow on for ever,
When life grows bare and tarnished with decay,
As through a leafless landscape flows a river."

And speaking of "best friends" (always an honoured minority), what is it makes the perfection of friendship beyond that tenderness and truth that Emerson claims for its essentials? Equality of age, condition, and position must surely here stand high, for though the two last points may vary when the friendship is well-rooted and grown with little or no danger, they count at the outset for much.

Harmony of disposition and taste are, of course, the very letters out of which friendship is spelt, and its perfection must ever rest on an identical creed. Low church or high may honour each other's sincerity, Quaker and Ritualist may meet on many a fundamental truth, Broad Church and Devotee may sing from the same hymn-book with offence to neither; but where perfection is considered, let there be no division on these most vital articles of faith, from which the whole conduct of life takes its rise.

With deep harmony here many a minor unlikeness, as has been already said, may pass unchallenged; and let us not forget that "He who wants a faultless friend goes friendless." Here, as in all relations of life, many a restraint must be endured to refine and ennoble intercourse; while we should be "Free as an Arab of our beloved," and leave him equally so. No stranger should be readier than the intimate friend with all courtesies of life; or quicker to honour those silences and reserves that even at most confidential hours, circumstances, known or unknown, may impose on his companion's revelations.

And the sparkle of playfulness should surely never long be absent from the union of congenial natures, and Sydney Smith's inspired saying as to what constitutes a wise man can be quite as truly applied to an ideal friend: "He should have as much sense as if he had no wit; and as much wit as if he had no sense!"

And what a friend he was—Sydney Smith! with his written and spoken talks with Jefferey over their work, and what a happy commentary on his witty maxim! And Scott, yet more, in whose dedication cantos to "Marmion" seem embalmed the lineaments of typical friendships of the first water; and whose clubs and every interest from youth to age (such age as he was to know) were one long tribute laid on the shrine of kindred spirits.

The century to which "In Memoriam" belongs has been rich indeed in friendships, and when one thinks that "such as these have lived and died," it seems superfluous to go to antiquity for further examples. But those are beautiful words that come down to us through Sir Theodore Martin's interpretation from the lips of Horace, spoken to his best of friends, and the truth of their prophecy well may make them sacred; for Mæcenas died B.C. 19, and Horace did not linger many months behind.

"Ah, if untimely Fate should snatch thee hence,
Thee, of my soul a part,
Why should I linger on, with deadened sense,
And ever aching heart,
A worthless fragment of a fallen shrine?
No, no, one day shall see thy death and mine!

Think not that I have sworn a bootless oath.

Yes, we shall go—shall go,
Hand link'd in hand, where'er thou leadest, both
The last sad road below !
Me neither the Chimaera's fiery breath,
Nor Gyges, even could Gyges rise from death,
With all his hundred hands from thee shall sever."

But for harvest of such classic friendships as these in ancient times and modern, sagacious sowing must go, and this must be done chiefly in youth, even though maturer friendships have vindicated their right to fame over and over again. Friendships may be in the main "born, not made," following some elective affinities no less than love ; yet it is well, oh, youth, to strike at one moral attribute in the character, at least, and see some distinct fruit of it in the daily trials of life ere quite losing the head over the fascinating exterior.

The truest living friendship the writer knows was founded on one side only on wondering admiration of the sweet meekness with which sundry privations were borne, imposed by delicacy of health on one yet able to join in society's doings. Only a croquet-ground, only loyal docility to duty, only genial perception of the humour of the situation, only unabated sympathy, pleasures, much-loved and no longer shared ; but something in the situation "gave pause" to one on-looker, and as evidences of gold chain the experienced digger into opening a "claim" forthwith, so something of the sort was done here ; and that friendship counts by decades now, and the gold that croquet-ground hinted of has rung true through their every year.

And what of friendship's sterner obligations ? Some would comfortably believe them non-existent, and to a mind that cannot see that inconvenient, unromantic thing—two sides to a question—may almost become so ; but where principle is stronger than prejudice, warning and reproof may be asked for over and above the "iron sharpening iron" which strengthens each.

And, as in Art the pupil had best begin where he will assuredly end, with the best models, it is well to study here the highest friendship earth has seen.

There were twelve disciples, and He called them friends. He was Master and Lord as well, but thinking of Him as a Friend only—ideal in that as in all besides—turn to three rebukes He gave His friends.

Once—and this was where the wrong was a personal one—it was a look alone, the much-recalling look to Peter. To those who on certain theories have "spoken often one to another," a look may need no interpretation ; from its mute remonstrance the self-convicted soul makes no appeal, but goes out full of softened memory and remorse to weep bitterly.

So gently was the charge of faithlessness conveyed to Thomas that one scarcely thinks of it as reproof. Only a few words at the last, going home like a lancet's curing wound, spoke of the blessedness of

those who see not, yet believe ; and how passionately must he of the vehement protests have wished that he had closed with that highest virtue of linking faith to love while yet the chance was his.

But to Peter again, Peter with whom our fellow-feeling is so great, for to him was earlier uttered the severest rebuke of all, the "Get thee behind me, Satan," never chronicled as uttered to Judas.

No over-indulgence here, or compromise with plain speaking, a mere suggestion of worldliness, and from a beloved disciple, met with one of the most scathing utterances in the Gospels. And yet it stands redeemed twice over from being thrust of enemy. The "I have prayed for thee," showed that He kept the friend apart from his errors ; and reference to His work in the future gave denial to any hint of abandonment. It is these that make that stern rebuke to a friend *in extremis* a model to all time, uncompromising, sharp, but leaving healing and hope behind.

Yet even abandonment, temporary and conditional, may be necessary in some cases ; only not below the surface should that abandonment extend, nor ever the link of prayer be broken for those whom we have once called friend. And the ready and generous admission that although a veil is hung over it to-day, the door of reconciliation is left gladly, yearningly open as regards the future, may save wounds from mortifying that would otherwise slay not only a friendship but a soul.

That hint of great things expected yet from Peter, great things for the very One rebuking them—what a contrast it is in its gentle encouragement to the proud unbending attitude so often preserved to an estranged friend. Well may it strike home to our wondering hearts, showing us in a flash, as it does, one glimpse of what God's notion is of the truth and tenderness exacted from us by friendship and by friends ; a rallying to the right side, trust in our worthiness in answering to the appeal, and affection that draws us to His heart by bands of forgiveness, encouragement and love.

But on those deeper things of life, enough. To those who have wrecked on other shoals, to those who sigh for some new interest on the treadmill of time, we would say, Try Friendship ; it can give both gold and flowers, both melody and strength, and interpret some of those "deeper things," to the great enlarging of our vision. And then in Heaven :

"Dear friend, when in the earth below
We spoke upon our future fate,
And feared each other not to know,
We little guessed this fairer state ;
Unhoped-for joys, undreamed-of powers,
All knowledge, feeling, friendship, more,
For dying seeds, now living flowers—
I never knew you, friend, before !"

FOUND WANTING.

BY F. M. F. SKENE.

I.

EVELYN CLIVE was decidedly above the average of most young women of her age in mental power and high culture. She had many rare gifts—a crystal purity of truth—a delicate sense of honour and dauntless moral courage—but she was lacking in one of the most essential qualities for a safe passage through this difficult world, she did not possess discrimination of character. At least, if it formed any part of her generally “right judgment in all things” it failed her in the most momentous crisis of her life, for she had given herself with all the deep affections of her strong nature to a man who was not worthy of her.

Miss Clive’s friends and acquaintances would not have been disposed to endorse this opinion. It was universally believed that she was about to make a most suitable and satisfactory marriage.

Lord Romanes, to whom she was engaged, was a man of irreproachable character. He was a few years older than herself, he was strikingly handsome, and he was the possessor of a fine old castle in one of the midland counties, of which Evelyn, with her *distingué* air and graceful manners would do the honours admirably. Also the wealth which her father, a celebrated judge, had left to her, his only child, would be very useful in enabling her *fiancé* to improve his estate, which had suffered from the prevailing agricultural depression. His most prominent characteristic was an intense pride of birth, and Evelyn was perfectly aware of it, but it did not affect her personally, as she sprang from a good old family herself, and she believed that the facts of heredity can prove, even in these socialistic days, that a long line of noble ancestors has the power to confer on the descendants certain chivalrous qualities which do not naturally pertain to persons of humbler origin. Evelyn was blind, however, to the contemptible personal vanity and the overweening selfishness which lay at the root of Lord Romanes’s apparently fine qualities, and, like a true woman, she set him up on a pedestal as a golden idol, without ever discerning the feet of clay, and offered up to him the entire worship of a most faithful and loving heart.

They were to be married in the spring, and Miss Clive had been spending Christmas at Romanes Hall with her betrothed and his young sister Lilith, the proprieties of the position being supplied by a ponderous aunt of the most dense and obtuse description, whose ideas for the time being were limited to a consideration of what her nephew’s *chef de cuisine* would be likely to produce in the way of condiments during her stay at the Hall, and the possibility of securing

a comfortable chair apart from the other guests, wherein she might slumber at ease in the evenings after dinner.

It is thus that Lady Wrexham is engaged on the occasion when we first see the various persons with whose history we have to deal. She lies back sleeping peacefully, her arms folded over the crimson velvet dress which clothes her ample proportions. Evelyn is at the piano playing a soft accompaniment to Schubert's "Farewell," which she is singing with exquisite taste and purity of style. She has a lovely melodious voice, with an undertone so strangely pathetic that it touches even the most callous of her hearers. She is very fair and pleasant to look upon, with her clear grey eyes eloquent of truth and candour, and her singularly sweet expression; her delicately-moulded features are pure and colourless as if cut in marble, but the soft rose tinge on her cheek tells of perfect health and a mind at ease. Her pretty evening dress is black in remembrance of the father whom she had lost rather less than a year before, and it is without ornament save a crimson camellia which her lover had placed in her bodice with his own hands.

His young sister Lilith, who stands by her side, is a complete contrast to her. She is some five years younger, scarcely yet seventeen years of age, and white and fragile as the flower whose name she bears. The light falls unrestrained round her lovely child-like face, and her whole appearance gives an impression of weakness and shrinking timidity; there is also a shade of unspeakable sadness, and almost, it would seem, of terror on her pallid countenance, and Evelyn's touching song brings tears to her limpid blue eyes. Her brother, standing with his tall commanding figure erect at a little distance, listens with evident pleasure to the music which satisfies all the requirements of his refined taste, but there is no sign of emotion on his proud, handsome face.

It is far otherwise with a man who sits apart, almost hidden behind a heavy curtain, with his eyes fixed immovably on Evelyn's face. Lyon Everard had been a *protégé* of her father's in the days when he was a struggling young barrister, and now, at the age of five-and-thirty, he had, by his own energy and perseverance, attained to a high place in his profession. Evelyn had a great regard for him, but that was all; for Edgar—Lord Romanes—dominated her whole being so completely that there was little room even for friendship to have a place in her thoughts. As for Lyon Everard, if the sun had vanished altogether from the heavens it could not have made his horizon so hopelessly dark as the disappearance of Evelyn Clive out of his life, for she was more than all the world to him, albeit he knew well that he was absolutely nothing to her, as now the mournful words of her song smote on his ears—

"Voici l'instant suprême,
L'instant de nos adieux;
O toi, seul bien que j'aime,
Sans moi retourne aux cieux——"

a wave of anguish passed over him which made the strong man writhe with intolerable pain—for he knew that she, his only treasure, indeed was about to pass away into a paradise of love from which he must be for ever excluded.

While the song proceeded there was a sudden movement on the part of Lilith which was unobserved either by Lord Romanes or anyone else in the room. Some sound seemed to have caught her attention outside the window which opened on a flight of steps that led into the shrubberies surrounding the house; with a perfectly noiseless step Lilith passed behind the curtains that hung over it and disappeared.

Evelyn sang one or two more songs at the request of the assembled guests and then rose, saying to Lord Romanes, "I must go to the fire to get warm, I feel quite chilled; there seems to be a draught of cold air coming from some of these windows. Are any of them open?"

"I think not," he answered; "I saw them all closed myself, but I will look." He went from one to another, and when he came to the window nearest the piano and drew back the curtain, he exclaimed with surprise—"This is open! how can it have happened?"

He went out through it and stood for a moment on the upper step and looked round; all seemed quiet and peaceful in the bright moonlight, and he came back into the room, closing the window as he said to Evelyn—"It must have been carelessly fastened, and so burst open; it is quite too cold for anyone to have gone out, though it is a fine clear night."

The evening came to an end without Lilith's absence having been observed by anyone. Lady Wrexham roused herself from her premature slumbers, assuring Evelyn she had derived the greatest pleasure from her beautiful songs, of which she had not heard one note, and then hospitably conducted her lady guests to their apartments. Evelyn waited for a moment to bid good-night to Lord Romanes; who was going out by another door to the smoking-room with the gentlemen of the party, and so she came out alone into the hall.

So soon as she appeared, Lilith's maid sprang from behind a pillar where she had hidden herself while the other ladies passed, and came flying up to Evelyn. "Oh, ma'am, will you please come at once to Miss Romanes; she wants to see you as quickly as possible. She sent me to watch for you an hour ago; she wanted you then, and I was to bring you instantly if I could."

"But what is the matter? I hope she is not ill."

"I do not know what is troubling her I am sure, ma'am, only she is in a terrible way."

Evelyn wasted no more time in questions, but ran rapidly up-stairs to Lilith's room and entered it without waiting to knock at the door, as a faint sound of moaning could be heard within. She was beyond

measure startled and alarmed at the sight of Lilith, who had flung herself on the floor, apparently in a paroxysm of distress, while half smothered cries escaped from her lips. The diaphanous white dress in which she had looked so lovely that evening was torn and disordered, and her long fair hair tossed wildly back from her face streamed in confused masses over the carpet. She had heard the door open, and before Evelyn could speak, she had started to her feet and seized her by the arm while she shrieked out the words:

"Oh! save him, Evelyn, save him! You alone can do it. Go quickly or it may be too late. Why have you delayed so long? Perhaps even now he is lying wounded—bleeding; if he dies I must die too, for I can never forgive myself."

She almost tried to drag her friend to the door, but Evelyn stood firm, and said to her kindly but decidedly—"My dear Lilith, you must explain yourself; I do not know of whom you are speaking or what you wish me to do; tell me the meaning of it all, quietly if you can."

"It is Arthur Moore, who has been driven to despair; you know him and his fatal love for me; it is he who may die this night if you do not save him."

Arthur Moore! Evelyn heard the name with dismay, for she knew that he was the object of Lord Romanes' intense indignation and resentment, and that his anger would be terrible if he found out that Lilith had been in communication with him. He was a young man of inferior birth, who had most unfortunately made acquaintance with Lilith when she was spending a few weeks at the seaside under the sleepy chaperonage of Lady Wrexham. She had been walking on the sands, while her aunt reposed on a seat at a little distance, when her parasol was blown out of her hand by the wind and fell into the sea. Moore passing at the time, on the impulse of the moment, plunged into the water half up to his knees and rescued it; he came back in his dripping clothes to give it to her, and Lilith could not but thank him warmly. It was not wonderful that her lovely face and sweet refined tones awoke in him an access of love at first sight which soon developed into an overmastering passion; he haunted her steps, he took every opportunity of speaking to her, and when she went home he followed and established himself at the village inn near Romanes Hall and made desperate efforts to win her to himself. He had caught her fancy, and she believed that she loved him, but her feeble nature was not capable of any deep or enduring affection.

So long as her little romance was unknown to her brother, she met her lover frequently in the most retired part of a wood at some distance from the house, and indulged in much sentimental talk with the young man, who simply adored her. But when the matter became known to Lord Romanes through an accidental revelation, his furious

rage at the idea of a tradesman's son daring to approach a daughter of his noble race, completely appalled his timid young sister.

She both loved and feared her brother, and she knew that she was entirely under his control till she came of age four years later. She succumbed at once to his will and promised to obey his orders—never again to have the smallest communication with the young man whom Lord Romanes designated as an insolent scoundrel. With Moore himself he dealt in a very summary manner, sending his man of business to him with a message that caused the aspiring lover's immediate disappearance from the neighbourhood.

His love was genuine, however, and it subjugated his whole being for the time to an extent which made him feel in all sincerity that life would be intolerable to him if he were to be finally parted from Lilith.

That day he had managed to convey a note to her, telling that he could not and would not live without her; he would destroy himself and put an end to his agony, but he must see her once again to bid her an eternal farewell. She could not refuse that last prayer of a dying man; he would conceal himself in the shrubberies near the drawing-room windows that evening; she could easily slip out while music was going on. If she failed him, she would hear of him the next morning lying cold and dead in the wood where they had met so often.

"And I went to him, Evelyn," she continued; "I slipped out while you were singing. Could I help it? It was to save his life; but I could not. He will kill himself if you do not go to prevent him; you, who are so strong and brave!"

Evelyn hesitated, greatly perplexed, and at last she gave way; the girl's anguish overcame her scruples, and she felt it might really be the means of saving a man's life.

"I will go, Lilith," she said at last, "do not distress yourself so wildly; I will do all I can to save him."

She snatched up the girl's cloak which lay near, and wrapped herself in it, and then ran swiftly and noiselessly down the great staircase to the outer door, which she opened and went out without having been observed by anyone.

Evelyn knew her way to the wood very well, and this strange expedition at a late hour on a cold winter night would not have troubled her at all, but for her consciousness that Lord Romanes would most highly disapprove of the proceeding. She almost shuddered when she thought of the violence of his anger against the young man and Lilith herself, if he ever learned what had taken place that night.

She sped on, however, at a swift pace, and the bright moonlight penetrated even the recesses of the wood sufficiently to enable her to distinguish the object of her search.

He had stationed himself where the clear light could fall on a piece

of paper he had torn from his pocket-book, upon which he was writing a few words rapidly with his pencil. Evelyn judged rightly that it was a last message to Lilith, for she caught the gleam of a revolver, and there was a look on his livid face which showed that it was indeed no groundless threat the weak-minded young man had made. She saw that she was just in time, and hurried towards him.

He started violently at her sudden appearance and guessed her purpose at once, for he knew her by sight, though he had never spoken to her; his only thought was then, that he would not be thwarted in his dark design. He did not speak, but, flinging away the paper on which he was writing, he took the revolver in his right hand, raised it to his head and fired. Evelyn had only time to fling herself upon his arm and alter the direction of the shot so that it took no fatal effect and only grazed his cheek, causing a superficial wound from which, however, the blood flowed freely.

He staggered back against a tree, confused by the shock and the failure of his purpose, and he made no resistance when she took the revolver from his hand and flung it among the brushwood; then only he moaned out:

"Oh, why have you been so cruel! I should have been without pain or consciousness by this time had you not stopped me; you have deprived me of my only hope of relief from intolerable misery."

"I have saved you from a wicked and a cowardly act," she answered firmly, "and I shall not leave you till I have tried at least to bring you to your senses, out of all the hopeless folly of your late proceedings." He swayed from side to side as she spoke, and she saw that he was becoming faint from nervous excitement; at once she took her handkerchief and deftly bound up the wound in his cheek with it, then she drew his arm within her own and bade him lean upon her without scruple.

Evelyn was naturally energetic and full of resources, and she had rapidly thought of the best plan to pursue under the difficult circumstances; she knew that there was a cottage on the outskirts of the wood, to which she thought Moore might walk with her help, even in his state of prostration.

"Come with me," she said, "and I will take you to a place of shelter."

He seemed to have lost all power and let her lead him away without protest. Their progress was slow, but it was not very long before she brought him safely to the labourer's cottage which she remembered to have seen. The inmates were in bed and asleep, but Evelyn knocked loudly on the door, and after a few minutes it was unlocked by an elderly woman attired in a remarkable costume with her husband's frieze coat flung over her night dress.

"What do you want rousing folks this time o' night," she asked sullenly.

"This gentleman has had an accident and is hurt," said Evelyn

"I want you kindly to let him stay here for the night ; I will attend to his wound myself, and you can go back to bed ; I will pay you well," she added, for her experience of life had taught her how easily the doors of the lower classes can be opened with a silver key.

The woman looked at her closely for a moment ; she did not know her, as it was Evelyn's first visit to Romanes Hall, but she saw at once that she was a lady, and there was that in the bright countenance, with its clear candid eyes, which took complete effect even on her somewhat dense perceptions.

She drew back and opened the door wide so that Evelyn and her charge could enter, and Arthur Moore at once sank down into a wooden chair which stood by the hearth ; the fire was still smouldering, and the woman flung some wood upon it which soon burned up into a blaze ; she looked compassionately on the young man's white face as Evelyn bound the handkerchief round his head more firmly, finding that it quite stopped the flow of blood and that the wound was not in the least serious.

"The poor gentleman looks very bad," said the woman. "Shall I warm him a drop of soup ; I have some here which they sent me from the Hall to-day for my husband who is ill, and I can soon make it ready."

"Pray do, I shall be very much obliged to you," said Evelyn, "it is just what he requires."

The nourishment was soon ready, and sitting down beside Moore she fed him with it as if he had been a child, thinking to herself as she did so that he was in all respects a singularly weak specimen of humanity. The warm food soon brought back the colour to his lips, and he roused himself sufficiently to sit up in the chair and look with a bewildered gaze at Evelyn.

"You can go back to bed now," she said to her hostess ; "you have been very kind and I will see that you are well compensated ; but the gentleman must stay here for a few hours, and I will remain with him ; we need not keep you from your rest any longer."

The woman was glad enough to go back to her ailing husband, and Evelyn remained alone with her very undesirable *protégé*. Moore had quite recovered from his temporary faintness, and he sat up in his chair and listened respectfully while Evelyn preached him a sermon which might have done credit to the most eloquent bishop in his pulpit. She showed the young man the utter madness of aspiring to Lilith Romanes, and then in grave and emphatic tones she pointed out the enormity of the crime of self-murder, the crime that could never be expiated by repentance, and the wickedness of thus bringing ruin and collapse on a life that had been given him for high and noble purposes.

By the time she ceased to speak Arthur Moore sat shame-faced and convinced before her, ready to change his whole course of action and do whatever she might advise.

"There's my difficulty, Miss Clive," he said helplessly, stretching out his hands. "I do not know what to do with myself; Lord Romanes wrote such a letter to my father that he turned me out of doors and said he would have nothing more to do with me; it was partly that, as well as my love for Miss Lilith, which made me feel as if the grave were my only refuge; I have no means, no prospect."

Evelyn was silent for a moment; then she said, "Might it not be best for you to emigrate? You could begin a new life in the colonies, and with your business habits you would soon find employment."

"I should like it beyond everything," he exclaimed eagerly. "It is what I have long desired, but my father would never help me in the matter. It would be the making of me, and I could soon forget all this misery. I have a cousin doing well in Queensland, who has written home a dozen times asking me to join him, but I have no money."

"If that is the only obstacle in the way, we can soon remove it," said Evelyn with her bright smile; "I shall be very glad to help you with the necessary funds, provided you will promise me utterly to give up all your past follies and to live as a sensible straightforward man for the future."

"I will, I will," he exclaimed energetically. "I give you my word of honour that I will follow your advice on all points, and I shall be deeply grateful for your help."

Having reached this satisfactory conclusion Evelyn at once made her arrangements for putting an end as quickly as possible to the eminently disagreeable vigil she was keeping. She told Moore that there was a train for London at an early morning hour, which started from a country station at no great distance, and that he must go by it, leaving her his address in town where she would send him a cheque for two hundred pounds on the following day; he was to sail by the very first vessel he could find going straight to Queensland, and never again, as long as he lived, was he to attempt to hold the smallest intercourse with any of the Romanes family, including herself.

She had so completely subjugated the weak foolish young man that he obeyed her without the smallest demur. It was already time that he should start for the station, and Evelyn thought it safest to go with him so far herself, in case his faintness returned.

She called to her hostess who came down at once, and paid her so liberally for the accommodation she had afforded them, that the good woman felt a keen desire that this lady might in the future bring many wounded gentlemen to pass the night in her cottage.

Then Evelyn went out into the lingering darkness with her charge, of whom she heartily desired to rid herself as quickly as might be. She soon saw that his strength was fairly restored, and after walking in silence by his side all the way, she stopped short as soon as the lights of the station appeared.

Then in the grey winter's dawn Evelyn turned to go home with her utmost speed.

As she did so, she saw that a man was standing close to her, evidently on the watch, and he at once peered into her face with an apparent desire to make certain of her identity. He wore a dress which might be that of a game-keeper or more probably of a poacher, for his demeanour was decidedly insolent. Evelyn drew herself up, and giving him one calm, haughty glance, walked past him and was soon on her way to the Hall. The servants were already astir when she arrived, and the doors unlocked, so she was able to enter unseen, and ran swiftly upstairs to Lilith's room.

II.

EVELYN found Lilith Romanes still in her evening dress, crouching down in a low chair wan and miserable. She had not attempted to go to bed. Evelyn speedily set her mind at rest. She gave her briefly an account of what had passed, and what had been arranged. Lilith flung herself into Evelyn's arms with a cry of delight.

"Oh, how thankful I am! what peace, what happiness you have brought me! Evelyn, you have saved both him and me; do you know it is the greatest relief to me that he is going quite away, since he is not miserable any more. I think it was only a foolish passing fancy I had for him after all."

Evelyn could hardly help laughing at the sudden dissolving into thin air of Lilith's ephemeral romance. She kissed her, smiling as she said—

"That is all well; then I think you and I had better both go to bed and get what sleep we can before the late breakfast."

"Yes; but, Evelyn, you must give me one promise," said Lilith, anxiously detaining her as she would have left the room. "You must pledge your word to me that you will never, come what may, let my brother know anything of all that has happened to-night. He must not learn, as long as I live, that I met Arthur Moore this evening, and that you went out to save him!"

"I do not see how I can give you such a promise," said Evelyn gravely. "Edgar will soon be my husband, and it is not right that I should have any secrets from him."

Lilith started from her seat with a wild look of alarm.

"Oh, Evelyn, you cannot mean it, you could not be so cruel! Do you know what would happen if you told Edgar that I disobeyed him? He would send me quite away and never let me live with him and you when you are married, as he said he would. Be merciful to me, Evelyn; say that you will keep the events of this night a dead secret from my brother and from everyone else. Do not plunge me in despair!"

At last Evelyn yielded, unwillingly indeed, for she felt that she ought not to hide anything from her future husband ; but there was this amount of weakness in her otherwise fine character, that she never could refuse a petition from anyone who appealed to her kindness.

"Well, Lilith, I give you my promise," she said. "Do not distress yourself any more."

Lilith's delight and gratitude were a sufficient reward for her concession, and Evelyn left her believing that all their troubles were over.

Therein she was greatly mistaken.

In the afternoon of the same day a servant came to tell her that a person who gave his name as John Webb wished to speak to her. She happened to be alone in the drawing-room with Lady Wrexham, as Lord Romanes had taken Lilith to visit some friends at a distance. Evelyn concluded it must be one of her *fiancé's* tenants come to ask her intercession for the lowering of his rent, for she had received many such requests since her engagement had been announced. She told the butler to show the man into the library, and went there without any misgiving to hear what he wanted. She entered and closed the door, and there standing upright with a sinister smile on his face was the man who had looked at her so closely as she left the station that morning. He was about the last person she would have wished to see, but she simply asked him with a quiet dignity of manner what his object was in requesting an interview with her.

"I have come to make a little arrangement with you, madam, which I think you will find to be very necessary."

"What do you mean?" she said haughtily.

"I saw you part with that gentleman at the station this morning, and I also saw you walking through the wood with him late last night till you reached a cottage where you remained many hours. I was on the watch, I tell you plainly, madam ; and, when daylight began to appear, I saw you come out of the door with the gentleman, and I followed you till you parted from him." Then he paused and looked her boldly in the face.

For a moment Evelyn was so overwhelmed with amazement and indignation that she could hardly speak, though her crimson cheek and flashing eyes showed the passionate anger that possessed her. At last with quivering lips she said :

"How do you dare to speak to me with so much insolence? Leave the room at once, or I will ring for the servants to turn you out."

"I do not think it will serve your turn to quarrel with me, madam," said the man composedly ; "you had better hear what more I have to say. I do not suppose you wish Lord Romanes to learn all I know about you. If you choose to make it worth my while with a good sum paid down, I'll promise to keep silence on this affair to everyone ; but if you do not pay up handsomely at once, I shall go straight to Lord Romanes and tell him everything."

"So that is your object," said Evelyn with ineffable scorn ; "black-

mail ! You see what you do not understand, and think to extort money from me as the price of your silence. I defy you utterly ; you can go and tell Lord Romanes whatever you please ; but you shall not stay in my presence another moment." She rang the bell sharply as she spoke.

"Very well, madam," said the man insolently ; "if you will not pay up, his lordship will ; he'll consider my information worth a good deal, I take it."

Her summons had brought the butler to the door very quickly, and as he came in, Evelyn said to him quietly, "Show this man out ; see that he leaves the house at once."

The well-trained servant obeyed without a word, and Webb found himself outside the back entrance to the hall without having been allowed to speak at all to his conductor.

However, he was not to be baffled ; he was a man of bad character who had once been under-gamekeeper in Lord Romanes' service, from which he was discharged for various misdemeanors, and since then he had not attempted to get his living in an honest manner, but tried to gain money in any nefarious way that presented itself. He had seen Lord Romanes go out, and he took up a post near the gate to wait his return. It was late in the afternoon before he appeared, and he then came alone, as Lilith was to remain for a fortnight with the friends to whom he had taken her. As his carriage stopped till the gate was opened, Webb approached the open window and asked very respectfully if he might be allowed an interview with his lordship.

"What is it you want ?" said his former master quickly.

"I have something very important to tell your lordship ; it is quite necessary you should hear it as soon as possible, my lord."

"Well, I cannot attend to you to-day ; come to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock."

"I will, my lord," said the man bowing respectfully, and the carriage rolled on. Lord Romanes had been absent from his Evelyn for some hours, and he was anxious to have a pleasant stroll with her in the grounds before it became too dark. He found she was in her own room, and sent her maid to ask if she would walk with him. She came flying downstairs at his call, bright and smiling as usual, and met his fond welcome with special delight. They went out together, and as she looked up into his fine face and gladly noted the deep tenderness of the gaze he bent on her, she said to herself proudly that no hateful calumniator would have power to lower her in his estimation.

"I would trust him," she thought, "even if the whole world spoke against him ; and he will trust me, surely, whatever a low hateful spy may say to him."

The evening passed very happily, and next morning at breakfast, as Lady Wrexham never appeared till noon, and Lilith was absent, Lord Romanes asked Evelyn to preside at the table as the future mistress of his house.

An hour or two later, Evelyn Clive was sitting alone in a little boudoir which had been specially set apart for her use, when the door opened and Lord Romanes came in. He closed it almost violently and walked towards her as she sat on the sofa, and stood looking down upon her with a countenance full of passionate agitation. She saw at once that Webb had fully carried out his threat, and her heart beat quickly even while she said to herself—well aware that she could give him no explanation, bound as she was by her promise to Lilith—"he will trust me—he must ; he cannot really doubt me !"

"Evelyn," said her lover, in a voice hoarse with strong emotion, "a statement has been made to me respecting you which I must believe is an infamous lie, and I only need one word from you to make the villain who has dared to concoct it pay dearly for his hideous calumny. I should have done so already, but he begged me to ask the truth from yourself ; he said you could not deny it."

"What did he tell you about me ?" said Evelyn, her voice trembling slightly.

"I can hardly bear to utter the words before you, but it must be done that the refutation may be complete. He said that he saw you last night walking in the wood with a gentleman, that you went with him to a lonely house, and only took leave of him at daybreak near the station yesterday morning. Quick, Evelyn ; tell me that it is a vile detestable slander, and I shall be ready to break the neck of the scoundrel who invented it !"

"I cannot," said Evelyn—"it is true."

"True ?" Lord Romanes fell back a few steps, overcome with dismay.

"Yes," said Evelyn, rising hastily and coming towards him ; "but, Edgar, there is a perfectly innocent explanation of it all. I am certain you would not blame me yourself, if you knew the whole truth."

"Give me the explanation, then, at once," he said fiercely ; "but I doubt if anything you could say would excuse your having laid yourself open to such an accusation."

Then, with all her sinking heart, did Evelyn bitterly repent her imprudent promise to Lilith. Yet would she not be false to her plighted word whereby she had promised Lilith that she would never—happen what might—let Lord Romanes, or anyone else, know the history of the previous night. She saw clearly enough that, in any case, either Lilith or herself must suffer by the intense anger which the affair, under any aspect of it, would arouse in her lover, and her generous spirit was content that the suffering should fall on her rather than on his weak, timid sister.

"Why do you not speak, Evelyn ?" said Lord Romanes, beating his foot impatiently on the ground. "Even a moment of this suspense is unendurable."

She lifted her clear eyes fearlessly to his face as she said :

"I was only thinking, with deep regret, that a solemn promise given to another person makes it impossible for me to enter into any explanation."

"Do you mean to say that you refuse me an explanation of what on the face of it is nothing less than a glaring scandal?"

"I have no choice," she said, wincing painfully at his words, "I cannot break my promise; but, Edgar," she added, in the tenderest tones of her musical voice, "surely you can trust me? I tell you truly and distinctly that, however strange appearances may be, what I did last night was absolutely innocent and right. It grieves me bitterly that I cannot explain it to you, but I think you ought to consider me worthy of your trust."

"I could have trusted you this morning with my life as well as my honour, but now—— Evelyn, do you mean that you will never tell me the truth as to this infamous affair?"

"I fear—never," she answered; "but when I gave the promise of secrecy, I did not doubt that you could trust me."

He turned abruptly from her and paced the room for a few minutes in violent agitation, then he came back and stood before her with a stern expression of countenance.

"Evelyn," he said, coldly, "there can be no palliation or half measures in this affair. You must understand at once, that if you persist in your suspicious silence, there can be but one result. I have to consider the honour of my race, and the lady who becomes my wife must never have been touched by a breath of slander."

At these words, spoken with the utmost determination, her heart seemed to stand still, and a chill as of death passed through her frame, for she had loved this man devotedly.

"You mean that we must part?" she said faintly.

"I see no alternative," he answered. "If you will not or cannot empower me to expose this horrible charge as a most infamous falsehood, that low scoundrel will spread it far and wide, and it will be known that I can give it no denial."

She did not speak, and after a moment's silence he went on, more gently:

"You have been very dear to me, Evelyn, and I looked forward to a life of happiness in your companionship. It will cost me much to part with you, but the pain of a love betrayed may be healed in time. The taint of a disgrace attaching to my race will go on with all its infamy to generations yet unborn."

"Disgrace! infamy! Lord Romanes, do you venture to connect such words with me?" Evelyn had been deadly pale, but now the hot colour flashed into her face and she confronted him with pride as great as his own gleaming from her cloudless eyes.

"Have I not ample reason?" he answered, sternly. "Is the charge that has been made against you anything less than disgraceful and infamous? And you admit its truth and you give me no explanation."

Evelyn looked steadily at him. She saw that he was prepared to believe the worst of the woman he had deemed worthy to be his wife—he did not trust her. She had been mistaken in him—he had not the noble nature she had attributed to him. He was narrow-minded, selfish, vain; nor could his feeling for herself have been what she imagined; it was a poor affection indeed which could not under all circumstances rest in unshaken faith. As she understood in that moment what he really was the love she had felt for him under a different impression of his character seemed to die away within her heart; there was no faltering in her voice as she said:

"It is enough, Lord Romanes; you are right; we must part at once and finally. You have refused to accept my assurance of absolute innocence; you do not trust me. Even if you were to learn the truth all must be at an end between us; you have doubted me. I will never now be your wife; I shall leave your house this day."

She turned from him and walked to the door. He did not speak, and as she opened it and crossed the threshold she looked round for one moment as with a mute farewell. He had flung himself down on the sofa and was sitting with folded arms and his head bent on his breast; then she closed the door and passed out of his presence.

Evelyn gave herself no time for thought, her one desire was to quit Romanes Hall as speedily as might be. She sent for her maid and told her to pack up everything that belonged to her, and make ready for an immediate departure. Then she examined the railway timetable, and found that the first train by which she could travel to London did not start till four o'clock; it left her more hours than she cared to spend under that roof, but there was no help for it. She went to find Lady Wrexham in the drawing-room, told her she was unexpectedly obliged to leave Romanes Hall that day, and begged her to order the carriage to take her to the station in good time. It was a principle with this lady never to trouble herself about other people's affairs, so she calmly acquiesced in Miss Clive's wish, and only expressed some mild surprise at her sudden resolution. Evelyn went back to her room and there wrote a letter to Lilith to tell her that the engagement between herself and her brother was entirely broken off. She was too high-minded to let the young girl know the cause of the rupture, but in case it should come to her knowledge she urged her not to distress herself if she ever found that Edgar had a mistaken impression as to her adventures during that strange night, as nothing could make any difference on their complete separation, circumstances having arisen which would make it impossible for her ever to be his wife. When this was done there was still some time to be passed before Evelyn could start, and being very anxious to avoid meeting Lord Romanes, she went out to walk in a retired part of the grounds, where a very startling sight suddenly met her eyes.

John Webb had been very summarily dismissed by his former

master after he had carried out his iniquitous design. Lord Romanes had ordered him out of the room, telling him he would see him again on the morrow, and if he found that his hideous tale was false he would know how to deal with him; if not—— He did not finish his sentence, but pointed sternly to the door, and the man went out in considerable doubt as to whether the information given to Miss Clive's betrothed would prove as lucrative as he had expected. That being the case he thought he had better try to make his market out of it elsewhere. Webb had friends among the servants at the Hall, and as it is well known that these inhabitants of the lower regions are always perfectly acquainted with the affairs of their employers, Webb was therefore quite aware that there was one individual among the habitual guests to whom Miss Clive's good reputation would be of the highest value. The result of this conviction on his part was soon made strikingly manifest to the lady whom it most concerned.

Evelyn was strolling along a side path at some distance from the house when she suddenly came upon a group whose warlike position filled her with amazement. Standing upright with his fists clenched, and his expression full of a burning indignation decidedly dangerous to his foe, was Lyon Everard; while prone on the grass at his feet John Webb lay doubled up, as the result of a well-aimed knock-down blow.

He was apparently not seriously damaged, for he began to wriggle away from the vicinity of Mr. Everard's feet, as if somewhat apprehensive that they might be employed for his further punishment.

Evelyn's sudden appearance on the scene was perceived at once by both men, and Everard quickly issued an imperative command to the prostrate combatant. "Get up, you scoundrel, and take yourself off. Do not let that lady's eyes light on your villainous carcase, or I'll send you rolling down the bank in double quick time."

The man needed no further admonition; he gathered himself up and limped away, rubbing his head ruefully where it had come in contact with Mr. Everard's clenched hand.

"What has happened—what does it all mean?" exclaimed Evelyn anxiously, as Webb, whom she quickly recognised, disappeared among the trees.

"Nothing to alarm you in the least," said Everard, looking at her tenderly; "it is a very simple affair; that villain made a most iniquitous attempt at blackmail upon me and I knocked him down, that is all."

Evelyn looked up with her clear candid eyes into Everard's face.

"Has he been speaking to you of me?" she asked.

"He has been speaking of you," replied Everard calmly.

"Did he tell you what he saw that night?"

"Yes."

"And you believed him?" Evelyn's voice trembled slightly.

"It sounded like the truth," replied Everard, "though it is very

likely the fellow is an infinite liar ; but of course, that it should be true could not affect anyone who knows you as I do : if you did what he describes, it was because you knew it to be good and right that you should do it ; being what you are, you can do nothing which is not good and right."

Evelyn gave him her hand in silence, she was too much moved to speak ; there rose before her mind in most vivid colouring the contrast between the two men who had both professed to love and honour her ; they had each been tried in precisely the same manner, and now had the one fallen to the very dust in her estimation, while the other had risen to purest heights of faithfulness and trust.

Everard had heard that Miss Clive was suddenly leaving Romanes Hall, and he guessed what had happened ; as he held her hand for a few moments in his strong grasp, he registered a vow that he would, when the time was ripe, use every effort possible for mortal man in order to induce her to walk with him, hand in hand, through all the difficult paths of this world, even to their lives' end. That vow he kept, and saw it fulfilled with perfect success some two years later.

When that time came Lord Romanes had learned the truth ; his sister Lilith, always delicate, had succumbed to rapid consumption, and on her death-bed, when earthly terrors could touch her no more, she told her brother the history of her own disobedience and Evelyn's heroic conduct, for she had always suspected that the unfortunate affair had been the cause of their separation.


Then Lord Romanes did justice to his lost love and bewailed his own fatal mistake. He was still unmarried and fain would have recalled his Evelyn had it been possible ; but it was too late, she was already the happy and honoured wife of Lyon Everard. Her untrusting lover did all that he could—he wrote to tell her he knew the whole truth at last and begged her forgiveness.

Evelyn was sitting beside her husband when this missive arrived ; she put it into Everard's hand with a smile.

"There is the solution of the mystery at last," she said ; "now you will know what I did that night."

"It has been a blessed mystery for me," he answered, "as it was the means of my gaining you to be the priceless treasure of my life, I am not much concerned to read this letter Evelyn, its contents cannot make the smallest difference between you and me."

"But I wish you to read it," she replied. "It has always been a source of pain to me that I should keep so much as the shadow of a secret from you, and now that dear Lilith has herself set me free from my promise of concealment, I can feel that the last cloud is swept away from my past."



LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

BY CHARLES W. Wood, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN THE
LOTUS LAND," ETC., ETC.

BLOEMFONTEIN. *May*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—In my last letter I briefly described to you our descent into the mines. It felt very much like going down into a maelström; the same tendency to vertigo; the same feeling of being swallowed up in a pit of everlasting destruction. But we came out of it all very happily; and our disguises discarded, once more knew each other and felt civilised. The next experience certainly nearly deprived us of reason and hearing; we had never even imagined such a roar and tempest of noise as we found in the stamping sheds; but even from this we finally escaped without damage. The experience was worth the risk. A great deal in the visit was extremely interesting. It was all as one huge, complicated bit of machinery, admirably doing its duty; one part dependent upon another; the whole working harmoniously. Nothing else enabled us to realise how great is the work going on in this new world; how it is likely to grow and prosper and extend its influence. Great things are often the result of small beginnings, but here from the very first they began with great things; the elements of success were always apparent. As has been said of more than one man of genius, so it might be said of Johannesburg, that it awoke one morning and found itself famous.

Perhaps it is wanting in the slight halo of romance that surrounds the diamond mines of Kimberley. There is something specially interesting and attractive about precious stones. They are certainly the most beautiful objects in the mineral world; to one who loves the charm and harmony of colour, a joy for ever. What can equal a matchless diamond? In a small space you carry about you all the hues of the rainbow. Light a taper, and immediately a thousand rays flash forth, and delight you with a feeling of power and possession—they are all yours, and neither [grow old nor fade away. Five hundred years hence that matchless stone may grace the hand of your fair and youthful descendant and flash out as brilliantly and freshly as it does to-day: a bond of sympathy between her on earth and you in Spirit-land, to which a mesmeric virtue may be attached, linking past and present together, mortal with immortal: for in precious stones there always seems to us something vital and mysterious. We have on our finger a small diamond worn for half a century by one who was to us life's sunshine, whose loss makes us realise, as



DOWN IN A GOLD MINE.

we never realised before, the infinite meaning of those words: "That death in life, the days that are no more." As we write it flashes forth a thousand rays in the sunlight, that change from beauty to beauty, and seem ever a reflection of her pure life and spirit; bringing down to us, very near to us, the vision of a gentle face that in its soft loveliness was ever radiant with almost a divine expression.

So the diamond mines of Kimberley in virtue of their gems possess a certain halo of romance denied to the gold mines of Johannesburg. Yet gold comes next in value and interest, and may be carved and moulded and graven into beauty. Even in Scripture, gold and precious stones are frequently classed together; and wherever Solomon, with all his resources, placed the one in decoration, the other was never far off. Johannesburg will probably last the longer; remain the arena of an immense industry deep and wide when the glory of Kimberley will have passed away; and the fiftieth generation from to-day will point to deserted cavities and abandoned ruins, and say: "Here in days gone by when a primitive race inhabited the earth, who could neither fly in the air, nor probe the centre of the globe, nor communicate their ideas without language, nor hold converse with the stars; here that primitive people dug for little stones that reflected the sunlight and rainbow, whilst we have both at our command, and draw fire and light from the one, and surround ourselves at will with a prismatic atmosphere that makes our common objects dreams of harmony and colouring."

So they will talk in that fiftieth generation, and in the meantime we have to be content with our day and possibilities.

Whether the gold mines of Johannesburg will exist two thousand years hence or not, it is certain that they exist to-day, and are still far from the "right ascension" of their prosperity. The mines now working have not come to their richness, and many mines have still to be opened up. For some years before the actual discovery of gold—as far back as 1854—its existence was suspected and reported. But the worthy Boers, not very enterprising and ambitious, thought much more of stocking a farm and persuading a few acres to yield fair crops than of seeking for hidden treasures. Years after, an engineer, specially sent, worked and sought for gold in very sight of the Witwatersrand beds, and finding no results abandoned the spot with fortune in his grasp. The very next foot of earth might have opened up all the concealed wealth. It is often so.

But the discovery was to come and did come. The first mine was not called after Solomon, though it might well have been. Perhaps the finders would not place themselves in comparison with the richest as well as the wisest of men; and perhaps they showed their wisdom. They did the next best thing they could; they called it Sheba, probably after the great Queen; and wealth beyond the

possessions of the Queen of Sheba flowed in to certain fortunate speculators. A fever of course ensued; thousands of adventurers flocked to the scene; £1 shares went up to £90; other mines and companies were started; until at last there came a crash and a reaction which the South African market feels to this day, but from which it is now recovering, to establish itself on a firmer, healthier basis. Wisely managed, prosperity will not only be great but lasting.

Leaving all this El Dorado atmosphere behind us, one fine morning we started for Pretoria, where we had arranged to spend a day. As we were to return the same day, we had to take an early train. The distance was only thirty-two miles, yet it was a three hours' journey; the train started at seven.

Johannesburg was still slumbering, when in the grey morning, we left the hotel. The town had not yet awakened to the fever of business and speculation. A sleepy night-porter had roused us at an unearthly hour, and then returned to his own slumbers. When we appeared upon the scene we had great difficulty in obtaining breakfast, though all had been arranged over-night. The want of system made everything a trouble and an effort. By dint of threats rendered awful by mysterious consequences prophesied—the unknown is always attractive—we managed to get a little energy into the two sleepy waiters who were supposed to be preparing us a sumptuous repast. We were thankful to receive bread and tea, and to escape just in time to catch our train.

The town-station is near the hotel, and the train steamed up from the further terminus, and took us "on board." 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class passengers seemed to seat themselves as they pleased, regardless of the fare they had paid; whilst the carriages were short American affairs with outside platforms, very hard and uncomfortable. A restless young man was our fellow-passenger, who presently beckoned in four other restless young men, certainly not in possession of 1st class tickets. All proceeded to bring out truly terrible looking cigars, for which they had probably paid a very modest coin. At seven in the morning, and after the lightest of breakfasts, this would have upset the balance of a saint, let alone an erring mortal. We mildly protested that it was not a smoking carriage, and the rights of a freeborn Englishman must be respected, even by an inhabitant of the New Republic. The five youths arrested their cigars on the way to their mouths, as wide open as their eyes from astonishment, and looked rebellious. Seeing, however, that we were quite in earnest, they decided that discretion was the better part of valour. Four of them rose in a body and silently filed out and transferred themselves to a distant compartment. The fifth youth, who had first entered, determined not to yield to the enemy, and remained, but did not venture to light up. In the course of half-an-hour he had restlessly occupied every empty seat in the carriage, and then finished up his performance by smashing a window. This let in a great deal more

air than was agreeable at that early hour, for the morning was still crisp and sharp. But it did more: it let in the guard also, who charged the restless youth so heavy a price for a new window, that he paid it under protest.

"And now show me your ticket," said the guard, as he stowed away the price of the window. And a third class ticket was produced.

"I've a great mind to fine you the extra fare," remarked the worthy and excellent conductor. "You've no business in here at all, but if you did come you should have behaved yourself. However, I think you've been sufficiently punished for to-day, so I'll let you off. But don't do it again."

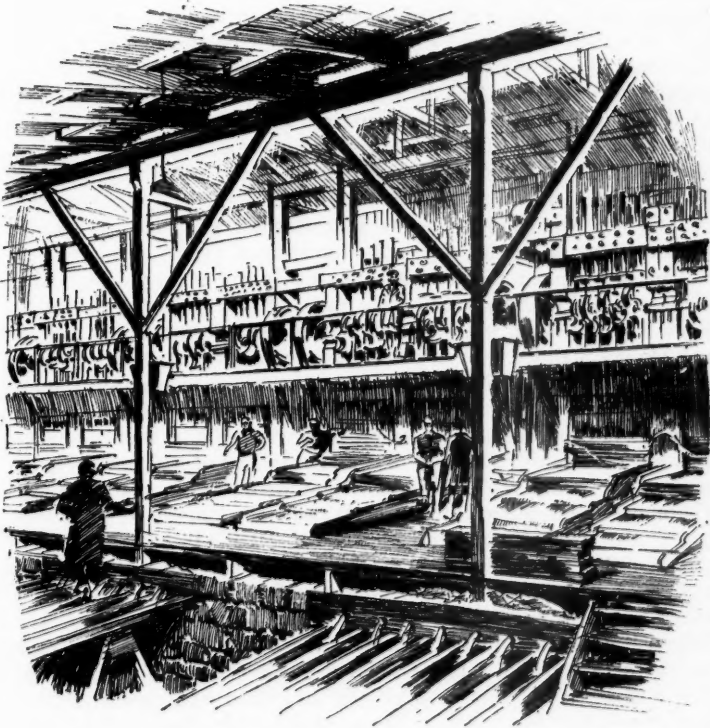
And the youth, feeling he had decidedly had the worst of it, departed and joined the smokers at the further end of the train. All looked decent enough, in spite of their behaviour, and were so well-dressed that we asked the guard for an explanation of the mystery. Well-dressed young men ought to have known better.

"Why, sir," he replied, "there's no great mystery in the matter. It's a holiday in Pretoria to-day—you'll find everything shut up as close as Sunday—and these boys are Johannesburg clerks—not one of 'em over twenty—going to Pretoria for a day's outing. Naturally they're dressed up in their best for the occasion. I'm afraid one of them will be a good many shillings short of his reckoning," he grimly added; "but it's not the first time he has given me a little trouble. If there's any mischief going on, he's sure to be in it. He's a restless young monkey, and I doubt not, in such a place as Johannesburg, will come to grief one of these fine days. A good many lads have gone the same way. Ah! I call it a bad influence. There's always a small gold fever going on, and they catch it, and it finishes up a good few of them."

In the weakness of our nature this account made us feel sorry for the restless youth; and if we could have quietly slipped the price of the window into his pocket, we should have done so, wrapped up in a short homily entreating him to try to keep a fairly steady head upon his shoulders in the time to come. When we reached Pretoria the four youths filed away, looking deadly pale from the effects of bad tobacco. We did not pity them; there are times when compassion is only wasted upon mortals. As our restless youth marched after them, he looked as though he and sorrow would never sit together; jolly as a sand-boy, and as careless. From the state of his complexion he evidently had not smoked, and the consequences of the smashed window were already forgotten. "Ah, well!" we sighed. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." The whisper was lost upon him, but no doubt he is unconsciously following the advice to the best of his opportunities.

The journey from Johannesburg to Pretoria had in it nothing very remarkable in the way of interest. For the most part the scenery

was wild and desolate. Wide stretches of sandy plain alternated with districts that were cultivated, and yielded abundant grain and fruits, and pasture-land. Cattle grazed, not upon a thousand hills, but in as many plains. The air was light and sparkling, the sky serenely blue, the whole influence exhilarating. Delightful for the eye to follow all those green or sandy undulations which seemed never-ending, and made one feel as if the world were boundless as space itself. Beautiful the waving trees, the trailing creepers, the wonderful flowers we



A GOLD STAMP BATTERY.

occasionally passed on the way. The train slowly glided through its 32 miles, and then with hills rising all around, we steamed up to our destination.

We found the station was some distance outside the town, and the long white road leading to it was hot and sandy; very desert-looking for the chief town of the Transvaal. The sharp, crisp morning had given place to a hot day. The sun glowed; presently we should have midsummer upon us again. A quarter of

an hour's walk through sand and dust brought us to the town itself, and very evident was the beauty of its situation. An amphitheatre of hills surrounded it, whose distant outlines cut sharply against the sky. We soon found it was to be a more closed day if possible than Sunday. Every shop was shut, the streets were deserted. This was disappointing, as we had only the day to consecrate to Pretoria, and wished to see it in its ordinary dress. The occasion was the re-election of the President, who on the following day, "dressed in his brief authority," would proceed with drums and trumpets to the House of Parliament, the Upper and Lower Volkraad, and go through the usual ceremony. Much preparation was being made in some of the streets. Triumphal arches, all evergreens and gilding, made one feel as if a Royal Wedding or Coming of Age or Wonderful Jubilee were in the air. Flowers strewed the paths, the débris of those used for decoration. The election or re-election of the President does not happen every year, and the people of Pretoria make the most of their few red-letter days. We regretted we had not happened upon the next day for our visit, but once more we must quote that time waits for no man.

Thus it chanced that we saw Pretoria in its holiday dress only. Perhaps it had its advantages. We gathered the impression that it was a city of leisure, where the days pass in a continual round of amiable hospitalities, garden parties, flower shows and picnics; where youth and beauty, like Titania and her Court, dance upon the green; where life passes in a refined atmosphere of gilded enjoyment, and the cares of existence are unknown. Of course it is not quite all this, but the feverish and speculative atmosphere of Johannesburg is here only a tradition. The influences are legal, ecclesiastical, political. These are the leading outlines of Pretoria as opposed to Johannesburg; the one atmosphere intellectual, the other mining and commercial. In Pretoria, you might never suspect the existence of a Stock Exchange and Money Market, of underground burrowings where human ants throw up gold and precious stones. Here the Bishop has his Palace and Cathedral; the former after the bungalow custom of South Africa; the latter a small unpretending building, long and low and narrow, which within looked very much like an iron church, but nevertheless possessed a certain simple dignity and repose and subdued tone that was pleasing.

Our first impression of Pretoria—and perhaps our last—was that it gave one the idea of an overgrown village, a "sweet Auburn of the Plain," although the town has extremely handsome and imposing buildings—more so perhaps than any other town in South Africa; but these are merely its heart, and might be spanned with the hand; you may draw a cordon round them. They exist in the one square—market square—in the centre of which rises the Dutch Reformed Church, a fairly large and conspicuous building. This, we thought, is the Cathedral, and here we shall find an ecclesiastical

influence ; but we were mistaken. The cathedral lies in the upper and more distant part of the town, hiding its diminished head in quiet thoroughfares. Pretoria belongs to the Boers, and the Lutheran religion is the most evident. Beyond the church are the market buildings, erected at a great cost ; much larger and more pretentious than Pretoria yet needs, but the wise inhabitants have built for the time to come. There are days and seasons when the square is crowded with carts and cattle ; a picturesque and necessary but not agreeable element. You have to thread your way to within the portals of the church in the face of glaring eyes and formidable horns ; there is much sale and bartering going on, and the air echoes with Dutch and English syllables.

The principal buildings cluster round the Square, but not too closely : there is breathing-space and a dignified expanse. Parliament House—which also contains other offices—is perhaps the handsomest building in South Africa, modern and imposing, but ungraced by any of the true beauties of architecture. No doubt the Pretorians are proud of it, and perhaps justly so, for it is evidence of progress and industry. Four or five years ago, Parliament House consisted of a small thatched building, humble, but more picturesque than this commanding structure, with its gilded female figure crowning the tower. It has long been a vexed question whether this effigy represents a Biblical character or the Queen of England ; and the two parties are divided into Reverentials and Profanities : just as there used to be Jacobites and Royalists, Whigs and Tories, Bourbons and Orleanists. The Houses of York and Lancaster wore red and white roses as badges, but we did not hear what were the distinguishing ensigns of the Reverentials and Profanities of Pretoria.

The town existed long before Johannesburg, for it dates back to the year 1855 : not a very ancient pedigree, but antediluvian compared with its younger rival. Undoubtedly it owes and will owe much to our modern El Dorado in common with the whole of South Africa, and the glory of the one is reflected upon the other. But Pretoria is lower down in the world by some two thousand feet, and one felt a sensible difference in the atmosphere. This was not fancy, but reality, and the inhabitants bear witness to it. Unfortunately Pretoria was wrongly placed. It should have been built on the slope of one of the hills ; it lies in a hollow. An amphitheatre of hills surround it, and in spite of its being more than four thousand feet above the level of the sea, it is warm and relaxing. The people look pale and delicate ; all but the old inhabitants, who have survived bad drainage and bad water, and enervating airs, and whom nothing will kill. The situation is most picturesque, but, like Dr. Syntax, you may pay too great a price even for the beautiful. Things are improving, but much remains to be done. Many die of pneumonia and consumption. The climate is dry in winter, but in summer much rain falls, and much of the ground is marshy, giving rise to fever.

Yet Pretoria is undoubtedly charming. It is considered, and we thought it, the prettiest inland place in South Africa. Long straight thoroughfares radiate from the square towards the distant hills. The whole place seemed to us to resemble a large and beautiful garden. Rose-hedges lined the roads, behind which were the 'picturesque bungalow houses. Most conspicuous feature of all were the large and graceful willows and ashes. These grew everywhere, by far the finest we had ever seen. In fact we had never imagined such willows. The streets were lined with trees. But they were not streets; they were charming roads with low houses dotted about here and there to give them life and interest. Flowers seemed to abound. The eucalyptus we frequently saw, and many an oak. The whole place looked like a perpetual flower-show; an Arcadian village embowered in green. Over all was the clear, lovely blue sky; surrounding all, that far-off amphitheatre of hills with their undulating outlines. If the climate of Pretoria is mild and relaxing, and not very healthy, its soil is wonderfully fertile. The Apies River takes its source near here, a small tributary of the great Crocodile River, and its banks are beautiful with overhanging trees that court their reflection, and looking downwards yet see all the wonders of sky and stars. In much Pretoria is greatly favoured, but the pale, often listless look of the people bore witness to the worm i' the bud; the one drawback; the *if* and the *but* that invariably enter into the brightest picture, the happiest lot. A perfect condition of things would never do for mortals; human nature must have a grievance; those who live under cloudless skies and perpetual sunshine, sigh for a return to winter and the grey influences of life.

Under the circumstances of this close day, we felt a little stranded in Pretoria. We had brought introductions, but every one was away; the place was out of joint. The Bishop would have been a host in himself, but he was still absent. No day could have proved more ill-suited to our purpose, and it was another example of the malignant crossness of events. Even the morrow would have been an improvement, for we should then have come in for all its festal gaieties: the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal—for what is pleasure without noise? The great display of flags and banners; completed floral arches; the Presidential procession; a polite invitation to the Presidential Banquet, where the feast of reason and the flow of soul would be assisted by generous draughts of champagne. Later in the evening a ball, graced by the President's lovely daughters. For surely he had daughters, and if so, they must be lovely. And they would have smiled upon us; and perhaps one of them would have been a Cinderella with a fairy godmother, and the glass slipper being found in our pocket, we should have been constituted her Prince for ever after. Imagination was boundless in its airy castles and possibilities. But it was not the next day, and what can be more

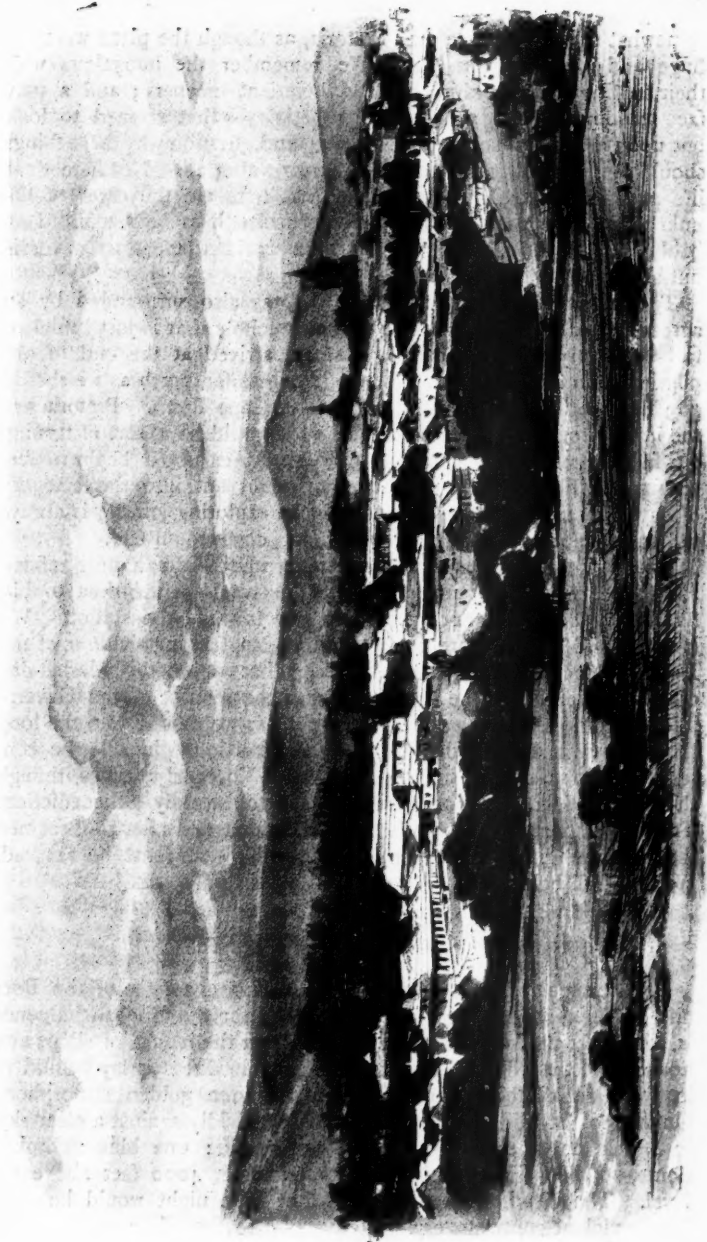


AVENUE OF BLUE GUM TREES, PRETORIA.

depressing than the day before a festival, unless it be the day after? Who has not passed through deserted ball-rooms and banquetting-halls when beauty and laughter and light and glory have fled, and felt creeping over him the shadow that is on all things—death in life?

But we had a *pied-à-terre*. We were kindly and hospitably received at the Club, though like every other house and place in Pretoria that day, it was nearly deserted. It was well situated and well managed, and its resources were at our disposal. The Club, on that occasion, was, to us, Pretoria's redeeming point. There was nothing to be done, nothing to be seen, no one was at home anywhere; we felt like those who lead a forlorn hope. Even Government House was inaccessible. We thought we should like to see the interior of the Senate House, where the affairs of the "Great Republic" are discussed and settled: the Great Republic of the Transvaal, which is going to make a famous name for itself and cast its treasures broadcast upon the world: we wished to carry away some impression of an intellectual interior which had cost its enterprising people nearly £200,000, and had been furnished at the cost of another £30,000—vast sums for this brave and bold little capital in the midst of the desert. But the hall porter was absent. That dignified official had probably gone to Johannesburg for a day's holiday, a sort of quid-pro-quo arrangement; the towns had exchanged inhabitants. We rang at the front entrance, high and wide: a sonorous bell echoed and re-echoed through marble corridors, until we thought it would rouse the much gilded and discussed statue at the top of the tower, who whether saint or mortal would come down and demand a reason for this disturbance of her solitary reign. But she came not; and we rang again; and the porter came not either. This was the great front entrance, of imposing presence and magnificent iron gates which allowed you to see a vision of a splendid staircase beyond, up which passes with slow and solemn step and grave and reverent mien, all the intellectual rank and fashion and profound learning of this New Republic. Then we bethought us of the back entrance, thinking that perhaps a Page of the Back Stairs might have been overlooked in the general holiday, and was lingering out a solitary existence, voting holidays a mistake, and that life would be bearable but for its amusements. We went round, but with the same success. Nothing had been overlooked; no "Douglass Creatur" had left open a kindly door for us; and if any page had been passed over he had sensibly taken French leave and departed.

But we gained a thorough idea of Pretoria dressed in its Sunday's best: Pretoria in holiday attire. We could at this moment draw out from memory a complete map of the place; the number of windows in every important building; all the highways and by-ways that run in straight lines and cross each other like the squares on a chess board. We remember the lovely weeping willows: the saules pleureurs as the French poetically call them: which threw a



PRETORIA.

somewhat sad atmosphere over Pretoria, as though the place were one huge and beautiful cemetery. We remember the bungalows with their trellis-work over which climbed luxuriant creepers; and a pale face standing at many a door with pathetic eyes that seemed to look out upon a world of sorrow and suffering and question why these things should be. Our first impression was wrong after all. Not here does life pass in mere gilded enjoyment; not here are the cares of life unknown. The little "City of Refuge" has still to be found. Probably the search will be lengthy in a world where man never is but always to be blest.

The day had its compensations. It was also surrounded by an agreeable sentiment of sadness; the melancholy that is just sufficient to be a luxury. For we had, in a sense, arrived at the end of our pilgrimage in South Africa. We had gone as far north as we should go; had reached our utmost distance from Cape Town. Pretoria was the limit of our experiences. After this it would be a sort of turning our faces homewards. Our visit to South Africa would begin to feel very much like a thing of the past, would fall into the category of days that are no more. The end of an exploring journey is always sad: it is another reminder that all things come to an end.

The hours seem to have passed quickly when—after a more refined repast than we had yet enjoyed in the Transvaal—it was time to bid farewell to the Union and wend our way towards the station. We crossed the Market Square, under the now lengthening shadows of the Dutch Church. The place was altogether deserted. Market-day carts and oxen had to be imagined—with the interior of the Government Buildings, which we left to our right as we passed into the long thoroughfare leading to departure. From her lofty pinnacle the contested image seemed to smile down a "Bon Voyage" upon us, though the Reverentials would look upon this as too worldly a benediction. Triumphal arches appeared in several directions, and after all it seemed that men are but children of a larger growth; each must be amused. We left it all behind us.

"We pass right out from land to land;
We have strange power of speech."

And strange at all times sounded the unknown tongue of the Boer under skies that felt so essentially *English*: for the English influence is altogether predominant. We passed from the region of shops and houses into the white, dusty, ascending road. Pretoria lay behind us in the glory of the lowering sun, bathed in a golden atmosphere. Outlines of buildings and spires stood out vividly against a clear sky, in which not a cloud or vapour was visible: one blue unbroken dome, sparkling in the lightness of rarefied air 4000 feet above sea level. The day had been intensely hot—the night would be cold. These violent contrasts, especially peculiar to Pretoria, form one of its dangers.

The station was quiet ; few passengers were returning by this train. Holidays they thought should be long-drawn-out ; and not a drawback but a charm was the getting home when light was breaking in the east. It was so much better to enjoy life to the full. Our noisy youths must especially have thought so, for they were delightfully conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps the railway journey with its interrupted cigars and smashed window had been voted a failure : restraint of all kinds is unwelcome to the disorganised mind : and they had decided to remain in Pretoria for the morrow's festivities, returning by coach on the following day. For a coach still runs between Johannesburg and Pretoria, and very delightful is the drive across country, through the light and sparkling air, under the blue unbroken dome.

As the train steamed away, we ourselves felt that time and events were dealing rather hardly with us. We should have liked to remain for the morrow's pageant and ceremony : the small pleasures of brass bands and triumphal arches, the more important assemblage in the Senate House ; the brilliant ball with its thrilling Cinderella episode. But it could not be. Man often misses his fate for want of a day's opportunity. We passed away from Pretoria with all its unknown possibilities. The shades of night fell and shut out the landscape ; it was ten o'clock when we steamed into Johannesburg.

A few minutes brought us to the hotel, where we hoped for rest and refreshment. But they were determined to charge us for what they would not supply. In the morning we had had no breakfast, and now they would give us no tea.

"Meals at certain hours," said the polite manager ; "and if you cannot conform to those hours, you must go without them."

In vain we represented that the age of miracles was past and we could not be in two places at once ; impossible to spend the day in Pretoria, and conform to the hours of the hotel. As travellers we must insist upon being supplied with something. At length we managed to obtain tea and a few dry biscuits, and for these small mercies had to be thankful ; glad to escape presently to our rooms. For there was no comfortable sitting-room at the travellers' disposal : nothing but a small "parlour" a few feet square, where people smoked and drank, and where it was interesting to watch the faces of speculators with their intense expressions, as in deep undertones, comprehensible only to themselves, they discussed the merits of new and doubtful schemes, the probabilities of to-morrow. Occasionally we could see by sudden eagerness, by the fire of suppressed excitement, that one seemed to think he had "struck oil" in an unusually good idea, awaking golden visions of long-sought and long-expected wealth and grandeur. Most of these dreams are destined to failure, working a certain amount of evil and mischief ; but the one lucky number in the lottery wins the prize ; the thousandth chance turns up trumps ; and so with the spirit of the gambler man goes on to his doom.

That night we especially noticed in the parlour, whilst waiting for our tea, two men who had drawn as far apart as was possible. As it happened no one else was in the room. They looked like the vulture and his prey; but probably were equally matched in cunning and experience and the chances of war. The one was talking, the other listening; quiet listening on the part of the one, intense eagerness combined with emphatic gestures on the part of the other. Conversation fell to a whisper when we entered. The face of the talker was singularly handsome, with refined, clear-cut features. He ought to have been in a different position, he must once have been a gentleman. There was the unmistakable air about him which never absolutely leaves a man born and bred in a cultured atmosphere. All was marred by the expression of the gambler; the man who, living by his wits, has gradually thrown honour and self-respect to the winds. Life has become an unequal race, and he has grown desperate and careless. No longer for him the proud boast: "Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur." It was a face to make the angels weep, with all its grand possibilities and indications lying in ruins. Still young, for he could not have been above thirty—but in expression, in experience, in lines of anguish and despair—perhaps of moral conflicts ending in failures: who can tell?—a century old.

His companion was of a very different stamp. A wide, pale, dissipated face; small eyes that yet glared unpleasantly through spectacles; a broad brow indicative of a certain power; a singularly flat head betraying an absence of all reverence; a disposition to be wary of. No gentleman he, in the present or in the past; no refinement of form or feature; no "caste" to lose; and probably no moral conflicts to render the conscience burdened and uneasy. Exactly the man to seize upon an idea and work it out if it could be done at all. But it was sad to see them together: one of the saddest sights we had met with in Johannesburg. Generally speaking the speculative element, and those who indulged in it, only drew forth one's contempt; the compassion in one's nature was not touched or needed. It is of no use wasting pity upon a stone, which cannot feel.

We met with many similar episodes and experiences in Johannesburg, though none quite so pathetic, none that called forth one's sorrow and regret quite so vividly. For we seldom saw in any human countenance the wreck of great possibilities. Generally speaking they were what they looked; had never drifted from great heights; water has a way of finding its own level; eagles do not degenerate into sparrows; in many natures *noblesse oblige* is their safeguard. Where great powers or possibilities end adversely there is always a subtle reason for it; a slight weakness of nature for which circumstances or temptations were too strong; a mind not perfectly balanced; a slight obliquity of moral vision which caused the finer boundary line separating absolute right from wrong to be lost—one of the most common and one of the most dangerous evils, because

the most unsuspected. This only makes the result the more sad, and it is of such cases as these that one can often say, "*Savoir tout, c'est tout pardonner.*" All ruins are beautiful excepting the ruin of a great nature: and this was what we specially saw that night on our return from Pretoria. Perhaps the calmness of our day had disposed us to reflection, but it is certain that we went off to bed a little depressed by what we had seen. We longed to go up to the unknown and extend to him the right hand of brotherhood and say to him: "Forsake your thorns and briers, and turn to your fir-trees and myrtle-trees and all shall yet be well." But these opportunities—if



A WAGON PARTY IN THE DESERT.

opportunities they are—generally pass as they arose; nothing is done; as a rule, nothing can be done. After all, we cannot set the world to rights.

Our last day in Johannesburg dawned. Before another sun had risen we should have left its conflicting atmospheres behind us. And one conclusion we had come to was that for an agreeable stay in this wonderful city, it is necessary to be quartered at a friend's house. There in the privacy of domestic life, you are fairly out of reach of the feverish element which runs through the place like an electric current. The hotels are uncomfortable, and moreover you are surrounded by the element we have described. But there is no fear

of your catching the fever; to a looker-on from the outside it carries its own antidote. Unhealthy and demoralising, you quickly come to the conclusion that "*le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*" "*Faites vos jeux, messieurs,*" rings in your ears in vain. It is not a syren cry that tempts you.

That last day was perhaps our most pleasant in this second city in South Africa. We took as it were a review of the whole. A friend escorted us in his comfortable victoria through all the charming suburbs. Once more we admired all the wonderful evidences of industry. We walked through many a young plantation, amidst acres of cultivated fruit and flower-land. All the slopes and undulations stretching far and near were rich with promise. We had come back to our 6000 feet of elevation and the air had none of the enervating softness of Pretoria. But it was not such a little Garden of Eden, where things grow of their own accord, and thorns and briers keep out of sight. We cannot have it in all ways. Here, on the other hand, people looked strong and vigorous: the "hectic flush of health" was frequently visible; the genuine inhabitants, who had taken firm root, were happy and contented and prosperous. Their lines, they say, have fallen in pleasant places. It is so. True, they have to pay for it. Johannesburg is one of the dearest places in the world to live in: a drawback that will rectify itself by-and-by, though the time is not yet. In Pretoria a small four-roomed cottage will let for £6 a month: an eight-roomed cottage for £15. In Johannesburg it is even worse. Other things, meat excepted, are in proportion. But all this will find its level. Small wonder, when we remember that seven years ago nothing existed here but barren plains on which a few mud huts had been erected for the accommodation of "prospectors" and explorers. The town has grown too rapidly. It is in truth a city of gold that millions would not now purchase; that seven years ago would have changed hands for £10,000 or less, including a vast area of land. It has its drawbacks: sand-storms that are terrible; rapid changes of temperature that are dangerous and make the death-rate in summer somewhat high. But in time this, too, may find its antidote. The people are fond of sport. There is a flourishing turf club, and outside the town an admirable race-course. It has frequent meetings and summer and winter handicaps of £2,500. Cricket grounds, tennis courts, football fields abound; wholesome influences. The Wanderer's Club supports large orchestral bands, and concerts are often given, both in the open air and in the pavilion, which is the largest in South Africa. All this we saw, and wondered; and did homage to the unparalleled enterprise of Johannesburg. It has spared itself in nothing, and has accomplished marvels, though still in its infancy. Above all, surrounding all, we have the light and sparkling air and clear skies, and this alone would raise Johannesburg far above the level of ordinary towns.

Yet we were not sorry when our last day drew slowly on to evening.

Our *pied-à-terre* was uncomfortable ; the human influences surrounding us were inharmonious ; there was a want of rest and repose everywhere. When the last hour struck we felt we had seen everything ; there was nothing to remain for ; no regrets to leave behind.

Our destination was Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State. The train left at ten o'clock at night ; the station was the more distant, lying outside the town. Darkness had long fallen when we left the hotel, and there was no "lingering sadness" in the farewell we gave it. A cab—one of the things Johannesburg does not yet excel in—whirled us rapidly down the street. Rashly, we also thought, for it was a darkness to be felt. Beyond the town we passed over waste ground, uneven as a troubled sea, with not a human sign or sound. The darkness and desolation made one feel as if the days of highwaymen had returned and we were being conveyed to some terrible doom. Presently we stopped, and there gradually loomed upon us the outlines of what looked like a long low shed : the station. Everything was in darkness ; the solitary porter was taking his ease and calmly refused to have anything to do with our luggage. The cabman placed it on the ground, and after demanding double his fare, departed. We felt very much at sea. Presently the station-master appeared, and with his help not too willingly given, we managed to settle down at last. But it was the most curious experience, most independent set of railway officials, most unorthodox station we had ever seen or heard of.

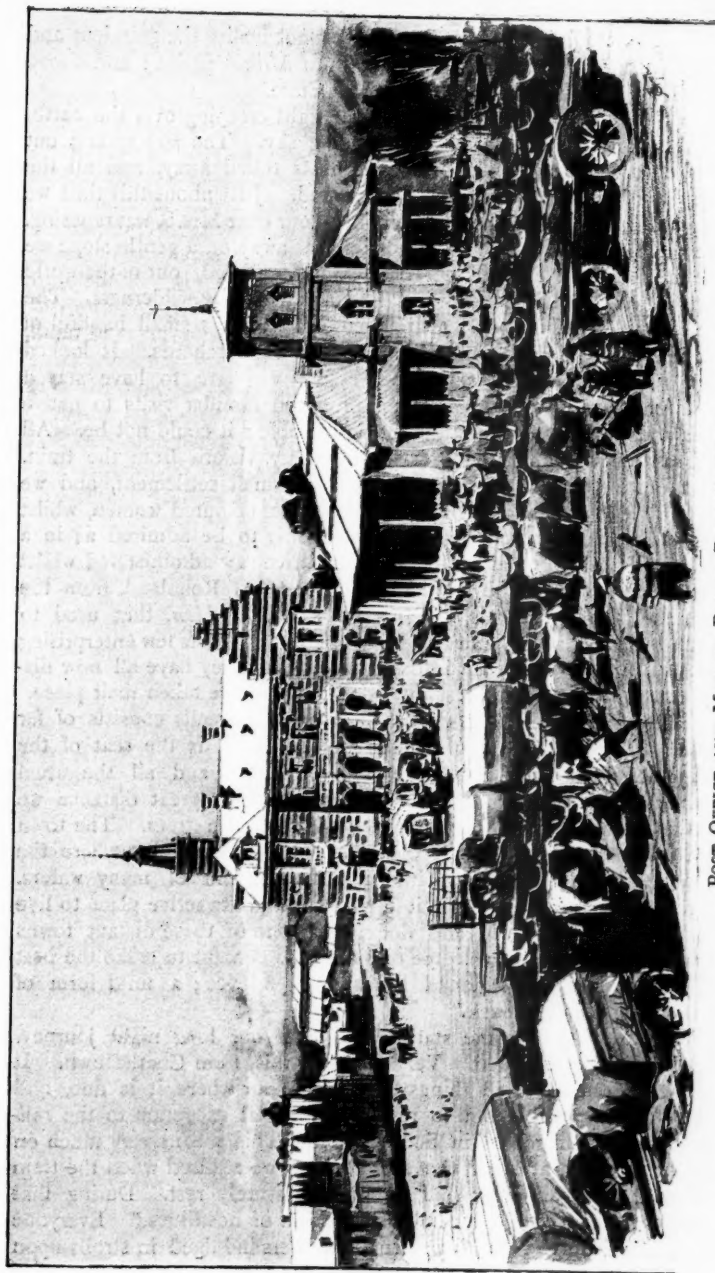
We had a long journey before us, being due at Bloemfontein about two o'clock the following day. Fortunately we found a civil guard who reserved us a special compartment, and made up beds to the best of his power. Everything depends upon the guards, who can generally make or mar your comfort in travelling.

The train steamed away in the darkness. At this station there were very few passengers. Everything had passed so quietly and lazily and unofficially it seemed impossible that the train was actually starting on its long journey to the Cape. It might have been a local train going to Pretoria, and we almost expected to see the five youths enter and take possession. In a few minutes we stopped at the town station, and here the platform was more crowded with eager and excited passengers, rushing roughly to and fro. Thanks to our obliging guard we were left unmolested, and those who would have entered he piloted elsewhere. Once more we were off, and Johannesburg was a thing of the past.

Thanks to our guard, the night wore away comfortably, more or less unconsciously. Stoppages were few and far between. When dawn broke in the east we had passed out of the Republic of the Transvaal into the Orange Free State : so called, not because it is an unbroken garden of orange trees, where blushing maidens may adorn themselves with sweet-scented bridal blossoms : but from the great Orange River which divides it from Cape Colony. As the light increased we found we were travelling through flat,

unwooded, wide-sweeping plains. And this, for the most part, is the aspect and character of the State. Its plains are endless and almost woodless. It has few ranges of mountains, but rather abounds in small stony hills, whilst a small and solitary table mountain is not infrequently seen rising out of a vast plain, sharply outlined against the clear blue sky. Like much of South Africa, the capacities of the Orange Free State have in great part still to be developed. Capable of cultivation, only a very small portion has passed under the plough. But it is a great pastoral and grazing country, well stocked with cattle. Phyllis and Corydon in the form of shepherd and shepherdess are frequently seen, but they are modern and unromantic. It has numerous rivers, narrow and rapid, that with their deep, precipitous banks are some of the most picturesque in South Africa. Yet like birds of brilliant plumage who have no song, these beautiful rivers cannot be utilised, their frequent rapids forbidding navigation. But should the Orange Free State in the ages to come develop into a populous and prosperous country with large towns and enterprising inhabitants, a reserve force will be here for electrical uses and a thousand other purposes as yet undreamed of.

The State appears to be rich in almost everything. In gold and precious stones; in every species of mineral and of mineral oil, all waiting further development. Since the days of the diamond mines at Kimberley westward, and the Witwatersrand gold mines round about Johannesburg northward, the Orange Free State has expanded. The prosperity of those districts has rebounded upon it, and Griqualand and the Transvaal come to it for supplies. Its granaries give them corn, and its pastures provide them with heavier material. As the train passes leisurely through the country, the wide plains on either hand are well stocked with sheep and goats, with horses and mules, with every species of horned cattle. It also promises to become a great ostrich district, an industry hitherto unknown to it. The country lies high, 5000 feet above the level of the sea, and possesses the blessing of health. It is cold in winter, but dry and bracing. Here invalids come, and grow comparatively strong, and may go on living in a world, that with all its disadvantages and crossness of events, few wish to leave. The relaxing airs and fever marshes of Pretoria are things almost unknown in the Orange Free State. On its wide plains grows the beautiful mimosa in rich abundance, and brushwood flourishes in its dry and sandy soil. In summer it is subject to long droughts, like most treeless countries. These sometimes burn and parch the ground, but the grateful rain surely comes in the end and the thirsty land quickly recovers. Very often a hot summer's day is succeeded by a violent and prolonged storm. The dark heavens are lighted up by vivid and constant flashes of lightning, which illumine the vast plains for a moment, and make the succeeding darkness intense and awful. The thunder rolls on unceasingly, most terrible



POST OFFICE AND MARKET PLACE, BLOEMFONTEIN.

and majestic of all sounds. England cannot realise the grandeur and magnificence of these storms on the South African plains : and above all others, the plains of the Orange Free State.

In the early morning we watched the light creeping over the earth, all the glorious colours of the changing sky. The sun sprang out of the east, a round red ball ; the mists rolled away, and all the mystery of night and darkness disappeared. Just about this time we stopped at Kronstad, where at that moment our dear Mrs. S. was reposing. We pleased our fancy with the thought that away on a gentle slope we gazed upon the roof of her charmingly secluded, out-of-the-world home. Not that it stood alone, like a lodge in a wilderness. The little town of Kronstad lay stretched before us : a small handful of houses, apparently, surrounded by gardens and orchards. It looked very picturesque. We remembered how we were to have stayed here for a few days, and had been promised familiar visits to native huts and kraals, and regretted the impossible ; it could not be. All we saw of the huts and kraals were hasty visions from the train. Just outside the station there seemed a small settlement, and we certainly did not fall in love with the copper-coloured women, whilst the naked children running about were only to be admired as in a delightful state for the chastisement we twice saw administered whilst the train waited. The district was once called Reimland, from the number of wild animals, *wildebeesten* and *blesbokken*, that used to roam over plains and prairies, giving good work to the few enterprising sportsmen who went out in days gone by. They have all now disappeared, and tame and less interesting cattle have taken their place.

The situation of the town was charming. It really consists of far more than the handful of houses we saw, for it is the seat of the magistracy for the district, has several hotels, and all the usual public institutions. Surrounding the town for a great distance we noticed large tracts of bush, and beautiful thorn trees. The town itself lies on the right bank of the Valsch River, near to where the Bloemspruit empties itself into it with a sound of many waters. Kronstad has much to make it a pleasant and attractive place to live in ; but when all is said and done, every one of these distant towns means that to a certain degree one must be content to make the best of things. It is a colonial life and experience ; a mild form of "roughing it in the bush."

We breakfasted at the station, and after our long night journey, felt like giants refreshed. Very different, this, from Charlestown. It is right even in small things to give honour where it is due, and therefore impossible not to record this signal exception to the railway refreshment rooms in South Africa. This means very much on a long journey, at six in the morning : as we realised when the train steamed off again after half an hour's leisurely rest. During that time there had been a general "suspension of hostilities." Everyone seemed off duty. Guard and engine drivers indulged in strolls upon

the platform and long conversations. Natives came up and mingled with the passengers, and one felt how very much, in their case, distance lent enchantment to the view. The station officials held levees. There was abundance of time for breakfast; and for once we were glad that here at least they have learned the art of making haste slowly.

We steamed away from pleasant Kronstad and continued our journey. The train passed through endless stretches of flat country. Now and then we encountered a rushing river. Occasionally a table mountain varied the monotony of the plain. At rare intervals we stopped at a small wayside station, where little was visible excepting the railway shed and a few natives. Huts and kraals alone bore testimony to human life. There seemed an immense amount of solitude and desolation, not without great charm. The hours wore on, until at length, long after midday, the train slowly entered a large station and the picturesque syllables of BLOEMFONTEIN sounded in our willing ears.

AUTUMN.

THE month is over when I saw thy face

For the first time:

The ash and lime

Have lost their bloom, and autumn in its place

Hath given a richer foliage to the tree;

There is a change—and how is it with thee?

The days are past when wood and zephyr breath'd

To both one tale.

Of what avail

The wither'd garlands spring so lightly wreath'd?

Idly the dead leaves from our path we cast—

So be it with the memories of the past.

Yet—if like nature—chang'd but still the same,

We meet again:

If not in vain

The dream I dreamt—then all my heart can frame

Of fond remembrance shall be ever shed

Over the time that's past—the month that's dead.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

A BUSINESS IDYLL.

HOW very abominable men are, when they fall in love ! They seem to lose all sense of right and wrong. They become utterly unscrupulous, and even habitually truthful men will develop a tendency to prevaricate, when there is a woman in the case. If you want to know how bad a man is, you should find out how he got his wife to accept him.

The firm of Phelps and Doolan, American and general merchants, is well known in the City. They do a big business, and are looked upon as smart people. Ten years ago the firm was John Phelps and Company, and John Phelps was sole partner. When his son Dick grew old enough he came into the business, and soon afterwards his father retired, the strain and worry being too much for his failing health. Doolan did not join the firm until three years later, and thus Dick was left to manage the business alone.

For so young a man, he was remarkably shrewd and clear-headed ; he seldom made mistakes ; he never missed an opportunity ; and he never lost his temper—even on mail days. Consequently the business expanded under his care like a pear in the sun.

He was no recluse, however, wrapped up in his work, and never giving a thought to other things. He went into society a good deal, and had more invitations than he could accept. For he belonged to that rare and almost extinct species known in the marriage market as "the plum." Was he not a bachelor of seven-and-twenty, with a large income, no particularly vicious tastes, and, beyond all, a house in Sloane Street ?

"So different, you know, from those horrid men who live in chambers," as Lady Contour remarked. "One never knows *what* they do there ; but when a man has a house and four servants, he *must* be respectable."

This argument was irrefutable, and the chase went on with renewed vigour. But Dick was wary, and not to be caught with the grain society usually lays out for birds of rich plumage.

He dined with Mrs. Hope, but was obviously bored when asked to turn over music for Miss Hope in the back-drawing-room. He danced at Lady Velaston's, but absolutely refused to sit out two dances running with the daughter of the house, in a quiet corner of the conservatory.

And it was not that he was averse to marriage. On the contrary, it was distinctly affirmed that he had been heard to say how dull his house was with nobody but himself in it, and how he wished he had some children to make the place lively.

And so time went on, and mothers with daughters began to despair, and Dick began to laugh at love, and say he should never marry.

And let it be here remarked that when a man gets to this state, he is as good as engaged.

It was a lovely morning in early June, and Sloane Street looked as only Sloane Street *can* look, with the fresh green of Cadogan Gardens, and over all a haze which the sun was not yet strong enough to dispel.

Dick left home with the intention of walking to Charing Cross. He expected a man from America, and wanted to call at the Grand Hotel to see if he had arrived.

The clerk in the inquiry office was not sure. There was a gentleman of that name, and he would find out if he was the one.

Dick was meanwhile turned loose in the hall. He looked at the clock, and the newspaper stall, and the post-box, and thought what a lot of people it must take to keep the place going, and wondered if there were anybody staying there whom he knew, and in fact endeavoured to destroy five minutes of his life with the least possible difficulty. Suddenly he looked up, and saw a beautiful sight. It was a girl—of course.

Not an ordinary girl by any means. It is a merciful provision of nature that the majority of English girls are (there is no denying the fact) plain; and thus the British voter can go about his business with calm spirit, and give his whole attention to the increase of national prosperity in relation to the individual.

This girl would have upset any amount of the most stolid of Her Majesty's subjects.

Just imagine—a girl about twenty, with a proper figure, dark grey eyes, long, dark lashes, a slightly drooping mouth, a complexion beyond the ken of a Londoner; crisp brown-gold hair: and—rarest and most important item—beautiful hands and feet. It is not to be supposed that Dick took in all this at once. One cannot understand Wagner in a moment, and beauty is a more subtle thing than Wagner.

Just then the boy returned to say that the man was not there, and when Dick turned round again, the girl had vanished.

He was already late for the City, and could not afford to waste any more time, so he hailed a cab and drove off. But the vision remained. Even when opening his letters, it kept coming back with terrible persistency, and refused to be put aside.

"Who is she? What a fool I was not to ask. Can I decently go back again? I would give anything to find out about her."

These thoughts recurred again and again, and at last, in sheer desperation, he took up the *Times*, and endeavoured to fix his mind on "Railway and other companies." Phelps and Co. had agents in most parts of the world, but their chief trade was with New York, where the firm of Pixey Brothers looked after their interests.

These people were in the habit of drawing bills and issuing letters of credit on the London house, and when doing so it was the custom for two of the partners to sign jointly for the firm.

Dick was still engaged in reading the *Times* when he was interrupted by the entrance of one of his clerks.

"Well," said Dick, "what do you want?"

"This draft of Pixey Brothers has been presented for payment, but it has only one signature on it, instead of two. Shall we pay it? I thought I had better ask you."

"Let me see, 'Miss Margaret North, twenty pounds.' Oh, yes, it's such a small amount. Pay it. Wait a moment though—who presents it?"

"A young lady, Miss North."

"American?"

"I don't think so."

"Show her in."

Dick was restless and disinclined to work, so he thought a little feminine society would do him good, and the draft was a sufficient excuse for seeing the lady. A moment later the door opened to admit—the girl he had seen in the Grand Hotel. He actually blushed, and his usual *sang-froid* deserted him in the most cowardly manner.

At last, after what seemed to him an hour (it was really about fifteen seconds), he stammered out:

"Er—er—Miss—er—North?"

"Yes, that is my name. I hope there is nothing wrong with the cheque?"

"Oh! yes, yes. Please sit down, I will see about it."

She was as cool and self-possessed as he was the reverse, and she looked so awfully neat in her blue serge gown and big hat, while he felt sure that his tie was crooked, and grew painfully conscious that his boots turned up at the toes.

She was a revelation to him. It was not only that she was pretty, and all that, but there was a *something* about her—an innate grace—which he had never discovered in anyone before, and he felt that she was very necessary to his future happiness. In fact he fell in love with her.

He wheeled a chair up to the window for her, and then crossed the room to his table, where he ensconced himself behind the huge roll-top, and tried to think.

"What can I do? How can I possibly prevent her from going away? I won't lose this second chance. What *can* I do? I must find a way! Ah! It's frightfully mean, but I'll do it. And besides, it's all for her ultimate good."

Men always seem to think that when they marry it is a good thing for the girl. In nine cases out of ten it is a far better thing for the man.

Dick got up, and going into the outer office, told the porter that he could see no one, and was not to be disturbed on any account. Then he went back. Miss North was sitting by the window. He had quite recovered his self-possession, and, going slowly towards her, he began :

"About this draft, you know ; the signature is irregular, and I am afraid I cannot possibly pay it."

"Oh ! But it must be all right. My father got it for me in New York, and it is all the money I have."

She was standing up now, and Dick could see the trouble in her eyes, and wondered if she was going to cry.

"Cannot you telegraph about it ?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I could do that. Do you mind waiting ? It would take some time."

"Oh ! I can wait, or come back again if you like."

"Oh, no ! Please wait. I'll see to it at once."

Dick had made up his mind to play a bold game. If he lost, it would probably lead to a row with Pixey Brothers ; but if he won—ah ! if he won——

He knew a good many people in New York, among others a broker on Wall Street, and to him he sent a telegram, asking him to wire the New York price of Union Pacific Railroad Shares. He had not the slightest intention of wiring to Pixey or paying the draft, and this was the best device he could think of, to make Miss North imagine that he had done as she asked. She was leaning back in her chair, looking rather miserable, and he went over and began to talk. But she was cold and reserved, and he could get little more than monosyllables from her, so he returned to his work. His eyes kept wandering in her direction, and it was in vain that he tried to write a letter.

At last one o'clock came, and he began to feel inclined for lunch. He generally lunched in the office, and he wondered if she would be offended if he asked her to lunch with him.

"I—er—I generally lunch in the office," he began.

"Please don't let me interrupt you. I will go away," she broke in, rising.

"Don't do that. I was going to ask if you would be kind enough to help me."

"Thank you, no !" she said, colouring slightly.

"But you must be hungry. Can't I persuade you ?"

"Thank you. I am not in the habit of accepting hospitality from people I don't know." This with freezing politeness.

Most men would have been thoroughly crushed by this, but Dick, except when off his guard, had boldness enough for anything. He merely walked out of the room, and told the porter to get lunch for two, as good as possible, and a bottle of champagne.

It was not long coming, and the porter was soon busy laying the

table—for two, as Miss North noticed with indignation. "He thinks I am going to lunch with him, but I won't; no, not if he went down on his knees and asked me. Odious man! I wish he would pay me my money, and then I could be as rude to him as I liked."

When luncheon was ready and the porter had withdrawn, Dick said:

"Will you come to luncheon? It is ready."

"I think I told you I did not want any lunch."

"Oh! Very well. I'm sorry."

Dick sat down at his desk, and began to write, and the luncheon remained untouched. There was dead silence, broken only by the scratching of his pen. Miss North glanced first at the lunch and then at Dick, and began to feel uncomfortable. He didn't look so odious after all; and besides, she was hungry.

Five minutes passed, and at last she said, rather piteously—

"Aren't you going to eat your luncheon? It will be cold."

"Not without you," hardly looking up from his work.

More silence. Then—

"If you won't, I suppose I must."

Most ungrammatical sentence, but Dick wanted no other, and they were soon seated opposite each other at the table. The porter had done his duty. There were oysters, and a roast chicken with green peas, and a cherry tart with cream, besides grapes and biscuits and all those things that women like.

Miss North seemed rather surprised.

"How luxurious you are," she said; "do you always lunch like this?"

"Oh, yes!" with a laugh. "It's part of the business."

She was shy and cold at first, but afterwards she began to talk, and they were soon good friends. It is curious how in England sociability and eating are so united. Is it so in other countries?

Miss North had never been to England before. She had come alone, as her father could not spare the time to accompany her, and she was stopping a day in London, before going on to Chippenham, where she had relations.

"How beautiful England seems after New York," she exclaimed.

"I do so wish we lived over here; but my father won't—or can't. He says he can't, but I believe it's won't."

"Perhaps you will live here after all."

"No chance of that, I am afraid. I would give anything to do so."

"Anything?"

"Well, you know what I mean."

"Yes, I know what you mean," rather sadly.

The conversation lapsed, and they sat silent for a few moments, until they were interrupted by the entrance of a clerk with a telegram—*the telegram*.

Dick walked to the window and read it.

"Union Pacific 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ buyers."

"Humph! Hope she won't ask to see it," he thought. "It will be a frightful thing for me if anything goes wrong now."

"Here is the answer to my telegram, Miss North," he began. "I am really very sorry, but I cannot pay you the money."

"Not pay? But—but what shall I do? That is all the money I have got, and——"

She looked very lovely, standing there with the tears in her eyes, and it required all Dick's self-control to keep him from blurting out the truth. There was a moment's pause before she again spoke.

"Thank you very much for the trouble you have taken. Will you give me the cheque? I must arrange something else."

Dick now felt it was time to give in, and said:

"One has to be very careful in business matters, Miss North, but I see you are in trouble. If you will permit me to help you, I shall be pleased to offer any assistance in my power."

She flushed at this and was silent for a minute. Dick thought she was offended. At last she spoke.

"I don't know why you are so kind to me. As I told you, I came to London yesterday alone, from New York, and I am staying at the Grand Hotel. Beyond a little American silver, I have no money at all, as my father thought it wiser to give me a cheque which I could get cashed in London; and now you say it is useless I don't know what to do. I am going to Chippenham, to some aunts of mine, and if I can only reach them, they will give me whatever I want. Would you—would you——" Her colour was coming and going, and Dick thought she looked prettier than ever in her anxiety.

"Please don't be disturbed," he said gently. "If you will allow me to help you I shall be only too glad. I can't bear to see you in trouble."

"Thank you very much. I shall never forget your kindness. You have done me a greater service than I can ever hope to repay."

"Oh! don't! Will you leave me your address at Chippenham, that I may let you know when the cheque has been put right? Perhaps you will write it down. Thank you."

Dick gave her some money, and she said good-bye.

"Hope she won't tumble on the truth," he thought; "how scornful she would be. I expect she can be fairly nasty when she gets angry. Poor girl! How jolly she looked." Two days afterwards there came a letter from her, returning the money. Only a few lines, but it seemed a good deal to him. And then he sent her the twenty pounds. He did not wish to be arrested for fraud, and he knew that she would write to her father at once.

Dick was very badly hit, and for days and nights together he could do nothing but think of her. Things worried him, too, and

his temper got bad. It became an effort to talk to people, and whenever he danced with a girl, he could not help thinking how much nicer it would be if she was Margaret North. This went on for three weeks, and then he gave up fighting.

"It is not a bit of use. I must see her again. Anything is better than this, even if she refuse me. I will go and see her, come what may."

The next morning found him in the train, bound for Chippenham. He got there soon after one, and after lunching and leaving his bag at the hotel, set out to walk the three miles to the village where Miss North was staying.

It was a blazing hot day, and there was not a particle of shade on the dusty road, so Dick was not sorry when he reached his destination.

It was a two-storeyed cottage, covered with ivy, with a small verandah and a fair-sized garden at the side. Undoubtedly a lady's house, but very small. Miss North's aunts were evidently not rich. Dick rang the bell, and inquired for Miss North.

"In the garden, I think, sir," said the servant. "If you will come into the drawing-room I will tell her you are here."

"Oh! you needn't trouble. I will go and find her. Round here?"

"Yes, sir; on the lawn, I expect." Miss North was lying in the shade in a long deck-chair (a relic of her voyage) reading a novel. Male visitors, or indeed visitors of any kind, were few and far between at the cottage, and her attitude was more comfortable than conventional, as she lay with one shoe off, and her hat tilted over her eyes. The turf was soft, and Dick approached unnoticed until quite close to her.

"How do you do," he began.

"Oh! How you startled me! I didn't know anybody was there," flushing hotly as she sat up in the chair, and made a dive for the missing shoe. "I do so hate being taken by surprise," she added crossly.

"You don't seem very glad to see me."

"Were you vain enough to suppose that I should be?"

"Well—er—no."

"Very well then, why do you grumble?" Then thinking she had been unnecessarily rude, she went on more civilly: "I suppose you are down here on business. It is very good of you to trouble yourself to come and see us. My aunts will be pleased."

"I am not down here on business, and I did not come to see your aunts."

"Oh!" shortly.

"I wanted to ask you a question," he said slowly. "Quite a simple one, but it means a good deal to me. I am a very ordinary, plain sort of man, with nothing particular to recommend me, but I

don't think I could love you any more than I do, even if I were the cleverest man in England. I came to ask you to be my wife. Is there any chance—Margaret?" he added tenderly, as he bent over her.

There was a still, sweet, silence, broken only by the sound of kisses.

Let us turn away from the further contemplation of Nature's Great Picture, which was never intended for exhibition.

One day on board ship, as Dick and his wife were returning from America—they were married in New York—he confessed his enormities in regard to the cheque; but Margaret was merciful, as she ever is merciful to her husband's many short-comings.

However, now that he was married, it was thought advisable that he should have a partner to look after him, so the firm became Phelps and Doolan.

ERNEST DAVIES.

MY NURSE.

SHE has a happy, peaceful face,
And yet within her pleasant eyes,
I often think that I can trace
Some touch of Life's deep mysteries—
As one whom sorrow has made wise.

A summer shadow, fine and thin,
Not writ for every passer-by,
And yet that makes her more akin
With all the heavy griefs that lie
On suffering Humanity.

Perchance some trouble of her own,
Outlived, or conquered long ago,
Or sorrow from another thrown,
Has given her face that tender glow
Which makes all sick folk love her so.

She comes into some darkened room
Like sunshine in the fresh Spring air,
And robs it straight of half its gloom;
While the poor prisoner tossing there
Grows quiet 'neath her gentle care.

My Nurse.

With every power fitly trained
She follows the physician's art,
Keeps whatsoe'er his skill has gained,
And brings to serve him, for her part,
Her patient loyalty of heart.

What balm lies in her helpful hands ;
What comfort in her accents bright !
Without a word she understands,
She shrinks not from the sorriest sight,
Is never weary, day nor night.

In the dark hour before the dawn,
In the monotonous hopeless day,
What though her very soul is torn
At pains she cannot keep at bay,
She holds upon her steadfast way.

She fans the feeble flame of Life,
She fights for every struggling breath,
She closes tired eyes to the strife,
And is not terrified at Death,
Knowing what lies beyond—beneath.

She of herself is quite forgot ;
In others' cares, in others' needs
She flings with generous zeal her lot,
And never sufferer vainly pleads
The alms of her unselfish deeds.

She is not beautiful, I think,
And yet 'tis hard to draw the line,
For souls like hers that form a link
Between things human and divine
Are apt, like Heaven's stars, to shine.

Men say that Love and Faith are dead,
They ask for signs yet will not see—
My nurse beside that pain-racked bed,
Were proof enough of God for me,
Who made such lovely lives to be !

CHRISTIAN BURKE.



THAT NIGHT AT PUKKAPORE.

BY G. B. STUART.

WHEN Gwenny Travers's photographs came out to the Station everyone was in love with them at once, and when, a year afterwards, it was announced that Miss Gwenny was really expected, and the Colonel went down to Bombay to meet her, there was great rejoicing at Pukkapore.

Every male thing, from the Brigadier to young Dubbs, rejoiced, on his own account partly, and also on that of Mrs. Travers, the Colonel's wife, whose eldest daughter Gwenny was.

Mrs. Travers was the mother and confidante of everybody; a year before she had been home on sick leave, and it was on her return that the photographs made their appearance, and began to be one of the recognised interests of the station. "Have you seen the Colonel's girl's photos?" "Which do you like best, the one in the riding-habit or the one with her hair down?" "Isn't that sailor-hat vignette awfully fetching?" People had hardly got over these comments and criticism before it was announced that Gwenny was really on her way out; and then, of course, out came the photographs again with renewed importance that one might decide, now that she was so near, what Miss Gwenny was actually like.

When the date for her sailing was fixed, Mrs. Travers began to fuss about fixing up her room. "She must have the pink room, Charles; it will want a lot of doing up, but I shall begin at once, and——"

"Not the pink room, my dear," said the Colonel, from behind his paper, "the little one beyond ours is more suitable."

"Indeed, no! that's much too small for any young lady, and I should like the dear child to have a pretty, nice cool room that she can walk about in. Why, at school, she had a tiny little cubicle like a cabin, and a girl thinks so much of her own room. I can't think why you've a prejudice against the pink room—it will want an entire turn-out, for the servants have crammed it with things like a go-down, but you wait till Rosina and I have got it into order, and you'll be quite astonished how pretty it will be."

"I'd rather she had the smaller one," persisted the Colonel, and though he did not give any reason his face wore a perturbed look, which was out of keeping with the trifling occasion of difference, but his wife had rustled away to take counsel of Rosina, the little Portuguese lady's-maid, and the pink room might be looked upon as a settled question.

By the time the Colonel started for Bombay the room was ready, and very pretty it was; the rather faded pink of the walls had been

renewed, there was a brass bedstead, and white aspinalled furniture, white curtains and pink sash-ribbons to tie them up: new matting, and a book-case, and a shelf for photographs running round like a dado. Mrs. Travers and Rosina even aspinalled the huge wooden cupboard built into the wall, and made a smart pattern of Christmas cards to outline the panels; then all the ladies came to look at their handiwork, and admire it, and talk about Gwenny's coming.

"Wasn't this where——" Mrs. Trent said, and then stopped; Mrs. Bogle, the doctor's wife, had trodden on her gown.

"Yes," Mrs. Travers hastened to explain, full of her own prowess, "this was where we used to keep all sorts of stores, and boxes and things; the room was much too good for that, only the Colonel filled it up with things the year I was at home. I had such work to clear it, but Rosina and I have worked wonders, don't you think?"

Mrs. Bogle assured her that the effect was enchanting; Mrs. Trent held her tongue and examined the curtains; and then they all went to tea.

Two days after, Gwenny arrived, and a week later everyone was agreed that neither the riding-habit nor the sailor-hat portrait was "in it" with the Miss Gwenny who sat smiling in her mother's drawing-room, making that always pleasant place a perfect paradise to the Brigadier, who was a disconsolate widower of eight months standing, and to young Dubbs, and to all the various grades, ranks and varieties, civil and military, who filled the wide interval between that zenith and nadir of Pukkapore male society.

The beauty of Gwenny Travers was that she smiled on all alike, and that is a very great and uncommon point of beauty, especially in an Indian military station: the Brigadier was a pompous old bore, Dubbs was a timid young ass, Mrs. Bogle was a good-natured gossip and Mrs. Trent a *mal à propos* tattler; but one and all received the same pleasant treatment—friendly, modest, sincere, from the Colonel's daughter, and the first weeks of her arrival sped merrily along with a continuous round of merrymaking, to welcome the young lady who had galvanised the dull little place into life. Then, as a natural consequence, came a whole crop of proposals from everybody, all directed at the selfsame lady. The Brigadier took to wearing primrose gloves without graduating towards Hope Reborn by any of the legitimate stages of half-mourning, and then as suddenly left for Kashmir: little Dubbs after galloping his red pony "Ructions" over from cantonments five days a week, on some excuse or other to the Colonel's house, turned his steed's head about, and was met gloomily cantering in the opposite direction, when everyone else was going to the tennis ground; it was the same with nearly everybody, and everybody felt a little low and reactionary in consequence, and applied for leave almost in a body. After that there was a general settling down, and Gwenny Travers and her mother began to taste the sweets of home life and companionship, the elder woman grew young again

in her daughter's society, and both the Colonel and she felt that the years that were past, the struggles and anxieties of their earlier married life were as nothing now that "the girl" had come home.

It was Major Danvers, the Colonel's right-hand man, who first discovered that Gwenny was not looking herself at all, in fact had altered very considerably in the couple of months she had been in India, a fact which her father and mother, in their increased happiness, had never observed. At first, he kept the matter to himself, and watched the girl closely, wondering if any of the love affairs which had been common property on the Station had really affected her, and sighed to think of certain long-deferred expectations at home, which kept him a poor man and a bachelor. Presently he made so bold as to ask Mrs. Travers if the heat were not very trying to Miss Gwenny? she had grown so pale and so quiet now that the first excitement of her arrival was over, and though she was as sweet and pleasant to everyone, there seemed something lacking in the spontaneity of her enjoyment, and Gwenny coming into the room at the moment, the suddenly awakened mother flew at her with a hundred questions of eager anxiety. Gwenny put them all aside, and Major Danvers got up to go, feeling horribly guilty at the storm he had raised; there was a look in the girl's eyes too, as she bade him good-bye, which haunted him; was she appealing to him? had anything frightened her? He strode off to his quarters feeling puzzled and vexed with himself—what a fool he had been to put his finger into a ladies' pie, and what a goose the Colonel's wife was not to take things more sensibly; he had only meant to give her a little hint, and she had flown into a fever and made him look like a fool before Gwenny; yet—yet—what on earth *was* wrong with Gwenny?

"That's where I find fault with Roger Danvers," grumbled Mrs. Travers to her husband. "He is a capital soldier and a good man, I know, but he's dreadfully *gauche*. Now poor dear Charlie Kettering would never have said such a thing—as if a mother hadn't the sharpest eyes of anybody in the world for her own daughter! Did you ever think, Colonel, what a couple Gwenny and poor Charlie would have made if he had lived? He used to call her his little wife years ago, before she went home to school. Ah, dear, dear, India takes the best of us!"

The Colonel's wife was a very charming woman, but she was not keenly observant, and it had never struck her that allusions to poor Charlie Kettering, who had died during the year she was at home, and whom the Colonel had nursed in his last illness, were specially distasteful to her husband.

The next time Gwenny met Roger Danvers at the tennis-ground, and could speak to him for a moment unobserved, she said: "Don't put ideas into mamma's head, Major Danvers. Indeed I'm all right, only a little tired sometimes."

"I was so sorry, Miss Gwenny, for the commotion that I raised—

I could have shot myself afterwards when I saw that I had frightened your mother and annoyed you ; but, forgive me for repeating it, you are looking very different and—— Are you sure there is nothing the matter ? ”

“ No—o, nothing ; that is—— Oh, if you’ve noticed, it must be noticeable,”—and Gwenny’s face grew suddenly pink and her eyes filled with tears. “ It’s the nights here, Major Danvers. I don’t know what it is, but they are terrible, always the same kind of terror and the same figure—— ”

She stopped in confusion.

They had walked to the end of the tennis-ground, and were practically alone ; even Mrs. Trent would not have been so tactless as to disturb them, and as they leant against the railing Danvers could feel the shudder that shook the girl’s slight frame.

“ Do you mean that you dream, and dream always of the same figure ? ” he asked in a low voice.

“ I don’t know if it is a dream, or if I am awake when the thought comes to me, but it is something horrible—in my room,” Gwenny said in shaken, jerky tones. “ I think I go to sleep all right, and it is later that it comes on. Oh, I can’t tell anybody ; let us go back to the others,” and she turned to walk back, but Danvers saw that her face was ashy white now, and her eyes distended with real fear.

“ One moment,” he said, detaining her. “ Can’t you tell your mother ? ”

“ I want to, but she took such pleasure in making that pretty room for me, and now, I can never enter it without the dreadful feeling coming over me, and it seems—oh, it seems as if I were going mad ! ”

“ Nonsense, Miss Gwenny ! you mustn’t say such things, even in jest. You must tell your father, then.”

The girl looked full at him as the tone of command struck her. She was a soldier’s daughter, and answered to it at once.

“ Papa ? Do you think I could ? He is always so busy, and I never thought of daring to trouble him ; but I could more easily explain it to him than to mamma, I think.”

“ Then do it at once ; promise me, Gwenny ; to-night without fail,” the young man said, almost fiercely, for they were nearing the others now, and Mrs. Bogle’s *pince-nez* was fixed like a burning glass upon them. “ Promise ! ”—and Gwenny promised in a quick whisper, for there is one thing a girl cannot resist in a man, and that is a sudden exhibition of masterfulness.

Like other powerful animals it is perhaps a good thing they do not know wherein their strength lies !

About ten o’clock that night, as Danvers was smoking and fancying he was reading in his quarters, Colonel Travers came in ; the younger man guessed in a moment something of what had brought him, and jumped up nervously with the expectancy of an explanation in his face. “ I want you to come up to the bungalow with me, Danvers,

I can tell you what about as we go, only look sharp," and a moment later the two men were striding quickly over the white moonlit road.

"My girl spoke to you this afternoon about something—something that troubled and disturbed her, and you told her to come to me. No, you did quite rightly"—as the Major would have explained his seeming interference—"quite rightly; it is myself I blame for my blindness till now. She came and told me this evening all about it, and now I want your help to see me through something that requires more than one man's nerve and evidence. That poor child tells me that every night since she has been here—since she has slept in the pink room, she has dreamt—she supposes it to be a dream—of a figure which stands beside her bed and urges her to come away, to follow it; in short——"

"A ghost?" Danvers asked; he was sorry for poor little Gwenny in this, to him, self-inflicted torture, but he did not believe in ghosts.

"As the figure turns away from her bedside she invariably sees its face—and it is the face of a hanged man, Danvers."

"Whew! Some one has told her the story!"

"I think not; even her mother doesn't know it. It happened, as you know, when my wife was in England, and I've taken the utmost care that the particulars of poor Kettering's death should never come to her ears—Rosina, the maid is new; the old story of Kettering being seen has quite died away. I was averse, it is true, to Gwenny having that room, but my wife had set her heart on it, and I thought it would make more stir to explain than to let it pass. And all these weeks that child has been suffering in silence! She says that after it has shown her its face it melts away, as it were, into the big corner cupboard. What do you say to that?"

"The cupboard where he hanged himself, sir?"

"The same."

"What do you mean to do, Colonel?"

"My wife has gone to bed with a headache. I told them to make me up the dressing-room bed, and I would sleep there, as I had some accounts to go through, and might be very late. I have just sent Gwenny to bed with a dose of bromide that will keep her fast and sound for the next nine hours. She was very brave and good about sleeping alone in the room that she so fears and dislikes, but I promised her that this should be the last night in it, and that I would watch her and keep her safe. Here we are"—softly tiptoeing across the verandah, and letting himself in at one of the drawing-room windows—"I am going to open Gwenny's door there across the passage and shall sit and watch—you can remain here, just within call; smoke if you like, but don't drop off to sleep if you can help it; and if I see anything, I will call and you must come and bear witness."

Danvers hardly knew whether to laugh or not at the Colonel's simple ghost-trapping preparations, but after all they were sensible, matter-of-fact measures which would reassure Gwenny to-morrow

morning when she woke after a long, refreshing sleep, and learnt that the spell was broken and nothing supernatural had been seen.

About two hours later: "Danvers, come!" sounded in a hoarse whisper across the passage. Roger was at the Colonel's side in a second.

What was that? In the faint light of the bedroom, where a night-light burnt, aided by the rays from the passage lamp outside, the two watchers in the doorway could see a slight, shadowy figure on the further side of Gwenny's bed—a figure that was strangely familiar to them both, for though but its side and shoulder were to them, they recognised the bearing and shape of Charlie Kettering, the smartest young fellow the regiment had ever known. The thing stooped over Gwenny's pillow and held out its arms, but the girl lay perfectly still, her face hidden from them, and after what seemed an hour of horror, it lifted itself up erect and turned away. Then at the bottom of the bed it halted for a moment and slowly cast a lingering glance round the room, moving its head deliberately till it looked full in the faces of the two men not twenty feet away—it was the face of Charlie Kettering as the Colonel and the Major had last seen it eighteen months before, livid and terrible from his own suicidal act!

"Hold back—hold back! don't wake Gwenny! it might kill her," the Colonel entreated as Roger struggled hard to dash into the room; the figure was gone—gone even as they looked, melting away in the direction of the great corner cupboard which Mrs. Travers had decorated for her daughter. "Here, help me with this," and stepping across to Gwenny's bed he lifted one end of the little mattress on which the girl lay and signed to Danvers to take the other.

"We'll have her out of this!" And without another word they carried her across the passage to the Colonel's dressing-room, and laid her, just as she was, on the Colonel's bed. Her father looked at her anxiously. "No, I believe it's all right, the bromide hasn't failed me; whatever that devilish thing was, to-night she has not seen it. And to think that we have let her suffer this without finding out! Gad, man, why don't you speak? what do you think it was?"

"I don't think, Colonel—I know it was Charlie Kettering."

* * * *

Next morning, Gwenny woke up very late for breakfast, and told her father that she had had a splendid night—not a dream nor a sound had disturbed her, as he might see for himself if it was he who had carried her bodily into the dressing-room. How in the world did he manage to lift her, and her mattress, like that, all alone? But the Colonel kept his own counsel, and sent Rosina to bring her her toilet necessities, for he could not even bear that she should enter the pink room again. And in the course of the day, such was the Colonel's talent for organisation, Mrs. and Miss Travers found themselves packed off on a visit which had long been impending, but which was now decided on all in a hurry, as the drains of the

bungalow were found to require immediate attention. And when some weeks later they returned to Pukkapore, it was to find the Colonel established in brand new quarters, for the engineer had given his verdict that the old bungalow was quite too hopeless a job to spend money over.

The two ladies are immensely pleased with the change. Mrs. Travers because she likes her drawing-room, Gwenny because she likes her bedroom better; the girl has recovered her roses and her spirits, and has forgotten, or pretends she has forgotten, that afternoon's confidence to Roger Danvers on the tennis ground—perhaps this is only because the Major is "Sir Roger" now—the old uncle in England having considerably died "by last mail"—and seems a little strange at first. But Danvers is biding his time—the Colonel knows his secret—and the Colonel's lady looks more favourably on the Baronet than she did on the Major, and has not been heard to compare him unfavourably with poor Charlie Kettering for a long time. Whether Charlie Kettering lies quietly in his grave, or still haunts the dismantled bungalow, neither Danvers nor the Colonel cares to inquire. Luckily Pukkapore is a stirring little station, where the recollection of poor Charlie's sad end, during the fever which surely rendered him temporarily irresponsible, has been wiped out by many happier events.

TINTAGEL.

GREY watchful walls! Mark how uncounted days,
Fierce sun, wild rain and fitful spray of seas,
Keen winter frost, and roaming autumn breeze
Have marred this strength with manifold decays.
Fair upon crumbling stone green fern displays,
While ceasing not, the drowsy drove of bees
Rises and falls upon the heathy leas,
And high o'erhead the lark pours forth his lays!
Pleasant to rest here, in this dreamy place,
'Mid gleam of waters on a rocky coast,
Among the shadows of King Arthur's pile,
To seek and find some strength of old-world grace
For these new days of noise and strife and boast
From out the silence of the haunted isle!

T. S. CUNNINGHAM.

CLAUDE WALTON.

I.

A COUPLE of gas jets were burning in a long room. They had been turned low, and resembled little blue knots surrounded by yellow halos. The dim light showed two rows of stout posts separated from one another by a space of about six feet. The posts were set at regular intervals. Between each couple swung a hammock containing a man's recumbent figure. Deep regular breathings showed that sleep reigned. The sheets and rugs bore in all directions the broad arrow, which denoted that this was no charitable institution, but one of her Majesty's convict establishments. The room was divided down the centre by a wooden partition, and the second half was an exact facsimile of the first one. On either side of the partition paced an assistant warder with loaded rifle.

The gas-light shone impartially down on the two nearest hammocks. The faces of the men occupying them were strangely contrasted. The stamp of crime was written all over the face of the one as plainly as the broad arrow on his bed-clothes. He was a type of brute force. The low forehead and coarsely moulded features, indicated a man of herculean vigour. The most automatic of prison governors might have arrested his steps at the next hammock, with an inquiry as to what possible crime could have been committed by the occupant. The man had a large head, and prominent features brought into extra relief by the thinness of the cheeks. The skin was roughened by wind and weather, but no natural forces could obliterate the stamp of cultured refinement. The coarse hair slightly shaded the forehead; it had not been cropped lately, an unfailing sign that the duration of prison life was drawing to its close. Yet the crime for which he was paying the penalty was manslaughter.

Claude Walton had grown used to answer to the No. 22,000 during over five years of toil and servile submission. He had suffered the keenest mental torture. The gloomy and impotent fretting against the inevitable had at first brought him to the brink of madness. The self-made mental tread-mill was sapping his vitality. He must control himself, must resolve to think of injustice no more. He must submit for the sake of those dearer to him than life. With an iron strength of will he used his energy in forcing the tormenting reflections away from him, and bent his powers to accomplish submission without deterioration. To wear the yoke lightly so that in heart and mind he might still retain the dignity of a free man. His sentence was seven years; by good conduct he had gained a remission of time, and now in a month he would be free. Free to return to

his beautiful wife, who was too simple and innocent even to expect a change for the worse in him.

The sharp command to "turn out" in the morning seemed to No. 22,000 merely a pledge that another twenty-four hours had slipped away. As he splashed the cold water from the long trough over himself, and sat in the chapel under the rows of loaded rifles belonging to the guard, he began already to experience a foretaste of freedom. He looked upon these things as if they had already ceased to affect his life, and were merely matters for curiosity.

The manual labour of the convicts at Dartmoor was incessant but not severe. Operations were being carried on along a moorland road about a mile from the prison. The task set was the widening of this road. The gang were thus stretched out in a line, and the cordon of warders formed a lengthened oblong instead of a circle. The horizon formed a wide sweeping line, for the country was not hilly, yet the moor was rough, full of peaty holes and great boulders.

No. 22,000's companion was the man in the next hammock. He was a "lifer" as the badge on his sleeve denoted. He gave no trouble to the warders, and had attained the rank of a first class prisoner. No 22,000, had not toiled shoulder to shoulder with him for so long without learning to read the slightest signs upon his face. Though the expression was as dogged as usual that day there was a slight restlessness in the man's eyes which betrayed emotion. The stillness of the country was broken only by the soft cut of the spades into the turf, or the occasional clink as they struck against a stone.

"What's up with you?" asked 22,000 in an undertone. After a momentary pause, the faintest possible wink confirmed the suspicion that No. 11,000 meditated an escape. After five minutes' silent work he spoke. "It's fine and clear to-day."

In the course of raising a turf 22,000 gazed round the horizon and solved the meaning of the apparently trivial remark. A faint dimness showed that a fog was creeping up. A fog on Dartmoor is the convict's friend.

"Will you change spades, mate?" queried 11,000, at the next opportunity.

"No," replied 22,000. Though a prisoner himself, he knew that it would be a questionable proceeding to aid a wild beast to regain his liberty, especially as he avowedly escaped only that he might prey upon the human race again. Why the spade was wanted was a mystery.

"Hold your patter," commanded a warder in passing, and the reason of the request remained unknown.

After the dinner-hour, No. 22,000 became aware that the spade he handled was of a lighter make than his own; No. 11,000 had effected the exchange.

"You must give back that spade," he announced when once more alongside his former companion.

"Not if I know it!" returned 11,000 cheerfully. "I've got it and mean to keep it; and if you make a noise about it, I'll do for you as well as for the others!"

No. 22,000 was uneasy. The discovery of the exchange by the guard was sufficient to cause a month's addition to his time.

The fog continued to thicken. The guard closed in. The two who had exchanged spades were at the outside extremity of the line. Another quarter of an hour passed, and the warders looked anxious. A preliminary stroke of the prison bell was heard, and the order, "Right about face," was given with promptitude. The two foremost prisoners sprang from the ranks at the same moment. With a bound like a lion No. 11,000 was beside a warder, and brought the spade down upon his head with a crashing blow. No. 22,000, perceiving the use to be made of his spade, had sprung forward to stop the murder. He only felt the coat of the fugitive slip through his fingers as he tried to grasp it. There was a flash, a report, a heavy fall, and two bodies lay on the ground. No. 22,000, and the warder.

Shot after shot echoed through the misty air. The prisoners, sullen and wondering, were hurried homeward.

After a very short chase, one of those in pursuit of the escaped convict returned. No. 11,000 had paid the penalty of his rashness, and was lying dead on the moor. He found several warders from the prison on the spot. The figure in uniform lay with ghastly face upturned to the grey sky. "Not much chance for him, poor chap!" remarked one of the men as they raised him.

"The convict's unconscious, too," said another, looking down at the drab coat stained with an ever-widening circle of red just under the right shoulder. "'Twasn't him as did for poor Jones."

"Serves him right though; he was helping t' other one to escape," answered the first.

* * * *

The helplessness of intense weakness is hard enough to bear without further aggravation. But when 22,000 awoke to consciousness after severe illness, he found himself in a walled and barred-up bedstead with the chances of a severe punishment. He knew well the rigour with which the law visits a second offence, and his first committal for manslaughter would weigh the balance against him. It was *his* spade that had been used to strike the warder down. His spring to the rescue was misconstrued by all. He gave himself up to the expectation of another dreary round of prison years.

Contrary to expectation, however, the warder recovered, and after weeks of struggle for life was able to give his testimony. He was a young man, noted among the prisoners for his fairness, and he did not hesitate to support 22,000's statement.

"I saw the faces of the two distinctly," he said. "No 22,000 sprang to save me, the other meant death."

Censure still attached to No. 22,000 for the change of spades. Even

by his own statement he should have reported it when discovered. This entailed an additional sentence. When No. 22,000 was reported by the doctor fit to leave the hospital, all vitality seemed crushed out of him by suspense and delay; he moved and spoke like a man in a dream.

II.

CLAUDE WALTON had an ardent impulsive disposition; he had married hastily before he fully understood his wife's nature. She was very beautiful, and had a natural grace and elegance that commanded admiration wherever she went. But it was a certain pathetic childlikeness that had attracted Claude's fancy. He had seen a delicate, beautiful young girl, pure as a lily, and brought up like a nun, plunged into the gayest society. Her objections to Sunday picnics were scoffed at. He saw her condemn herself to a book of sermons for the afternoon, though with a quivering lip. Then he saw her growing hardened; no blush spring to her cheek at words which had brought the ready colour a week or two before. He had resolved to take her under his protection, and encourage her simplicity. Yet six years of married life had shown him that the narrowness of her notions accorded with the narrowness of her mind. She was unswerving in principle, but altogether incapable of true love or self-sacrifice. She had under all her childlikeness a vein of obstinacy. When he was committed for manslaughter, this obstinacy was directed against himself. He was an outcast, he had sinned, no amount of reasoning could drive that from her mind. She placed a barrier between them. He knew this, but yet he loved her, and looked forward with desperate longing to make up to her and his little girl all that he had brought upon them. He had left his wife, at all events, an affectionate, sensitive girl; when he came out of prison he returned to a gracious immovable woman. She never mentioned his prison career; she shrank even from his referring to it, but she was willing to accompany him wherever he went, and to share the hardships it brought upon them both.

To a small sea-side village on the coast of Cornwall they went, for the first year of re-union, and sometimes Claude could almost imagine the clinging tender child-wife had come back. He found staunch friends where he least expected them. One of his cousins, a Captain Montagu, whom he had always regarded as little more than a dandy, was the most loyal of all. Nothing but staying in the same village during his leave would satisfy him. He rendered Claude inestimable service by forcing him to take long walks, and make fishing expeditions. Claude Walton was the shadow of his former self. His great height added to his gaunt thinness. He had never recovered from the effects of that merciless bullet.

One day the sea was smooth as a mill pond, and a haze hung over the horizon. Claude and his wife stood by a railing that edged the summit of the cliff. It may have been a momentary forgetfulness of

all that had passed, a remembrance of the time when she thought him the noblest man on earth, that made Lilian slip her hand through her husband's arm.

They were quite alone. Before them—

"A burning sea of burnished brass,
The calm sea caught the noontide rays,
And sunny slopes of golden grass,
And wastes of weed flower seemed to blaze;
Beyond the shining silver greys,
Beyond the shades of denser bloom,
The sky-line girt with glowing haze."

Claude responded gladly to the first spontaneous tender movement since his return from prison. He made an effort to explain what he had wished to make her understand during all the years of toil. "Lilian dear, I know you dislike my mentioning the hateful word prison, but there can be no true understanding between us till we have spoken on the subject. I want you to take my view of it. I am no more ashamed of having been in prison than I am of standing here. Punishment does not constitute disgrace. It was hard enough to bear without that. Don't move away, dear, they can never give me back the years I passed separated from you and Geraldine. But I resolved that the mark they made on my life should not be one of degradation. I am resolved to let it mar what remains to me as little as possible. You will help me, Lilian?"

"Oh yes, of course."

A less conscientious woman might have concealed her feelings. Lilian did not believe him innocent, and her rigid Puritanism shrank from a shadow of prevarication.

Claude saw it was hopeless, and stifled down his yearning for sympathy. He left his wife at a house where she wished to call, and went home. He was very weary. His highly-strung poetical nature had a large element of the woman in it. It was a relief to him to find Captain Montagu smoking in his sitting-room. A packet lay on the table come by the post; as Claude opened it he uttered a slight exclamation, and tossed the two or three photographs it contained over to Montagu. He knew what they were. Representations of woods, with waving fern and dense foliage. It was there that scene of bloodshed had been enacted.

"My solicitor came across them," explained Claude, "and sent them to me. They were taken at the time of the trial to assist the intelligent jury in arriving at a conclusion."

"Fools!"

Claude smiled wearily. "Your belief in me, Montagu, is one of the strangest facts I have ever come across."

"It seems to me incredible that anyone could believe you guilty."

"Yet it was impossible for the jury to give a verdict otherwise. Colonel Helton and I were known to be bitter enemies. That day

when shooting we were alone in the wood. He exasperated me beyond endurance. I had a horrible temper then. I said 'You, blackguard, you would not dare to say that if I could challenge you.' He sprang at me to strike me across the face. In stepping back to avoid him, I tripped, and my trigger caught in the undergrowth. A keeper ran up in time to catch him as he fell, with the shot in his breast. He looked up at me, and said slowly, 'You've done for me at last, you hound!'"

"He meant to incriminate you."

"I suppose so. My gun had caused his death; but it was his own fault. The keeper had unluckily heard my last words. I only wonder they didn't bring it in murder. I had a very able defence. The quarrel related to my wife and some statements about her, which I had traced to Helton. I meant to horsewhip him publicly before I had done, but unfortunately I killed him instead."

They sat looking out into the long straggling village street, and saw Mrs. Walton come into the house.

* * * * *

A year passed, bringing no change in the relations between Claude and his wife. A gradual lethargy had crept over Mr. Walton. The bullet had worked some damage to the lungs that was only now beginning to be apparent. At last this developed into real illness, a kind of wasting away, accompanied with all the symptoms of a galloping consumption. Lilian made an excellent sick nurse; her husband watched her moving quietly and gently about his room.

"I want you to tell me something, Lilian," he whispered one day. She paused, and coming to the bedside, laid her cool white fingers against his wasted hand. "I cannot possibly get through this," he said huskily. She looked at him suddenly, and knew that he spoke the truth. She had all the time been forcing the knowledge from her. "I may not be conscious for long, my darling, but I cannot leave you till I hear you say once you believe me completely innocent of any intention to kill Colonel Helton." Her fingers moved nervously in his; with her other hand she smoothed back the coarse hair; there might be tenderness in the action, but it lacked warmth.

"Yes, I believe you, Claude." Her manner gave the lie to her words. Even as she spoke she condemned herself for the untruth. This was a greater sin to her rigid formalism than to leave unfortified the dying hours of her husband.

"Thank you." His fingers relaxed their feeble hold, and he closed his weary eyes. Once more, for the last time, he gave up the attempt. The barrier between them could never now be broken down. It was of no use to show that he disbelieved her, and of far less use to struggle again. He resigned himself, and from that hour sank rapidly. He was rarely fully awake. Swiftly and almost unconsciously he passed into the Valley of the Shadow.

G. E. MITTON.

AN ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

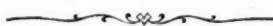
PICTURED walls and rich piled carpet,
Books and costly Dresden china,
Curtained windows overlooking
 Gay balconies of flowers;
Light and warmth and dainty fragrance,
Dulcet music for the asking,
Comfort, elegance and leisure
 Through all the sunny hours.

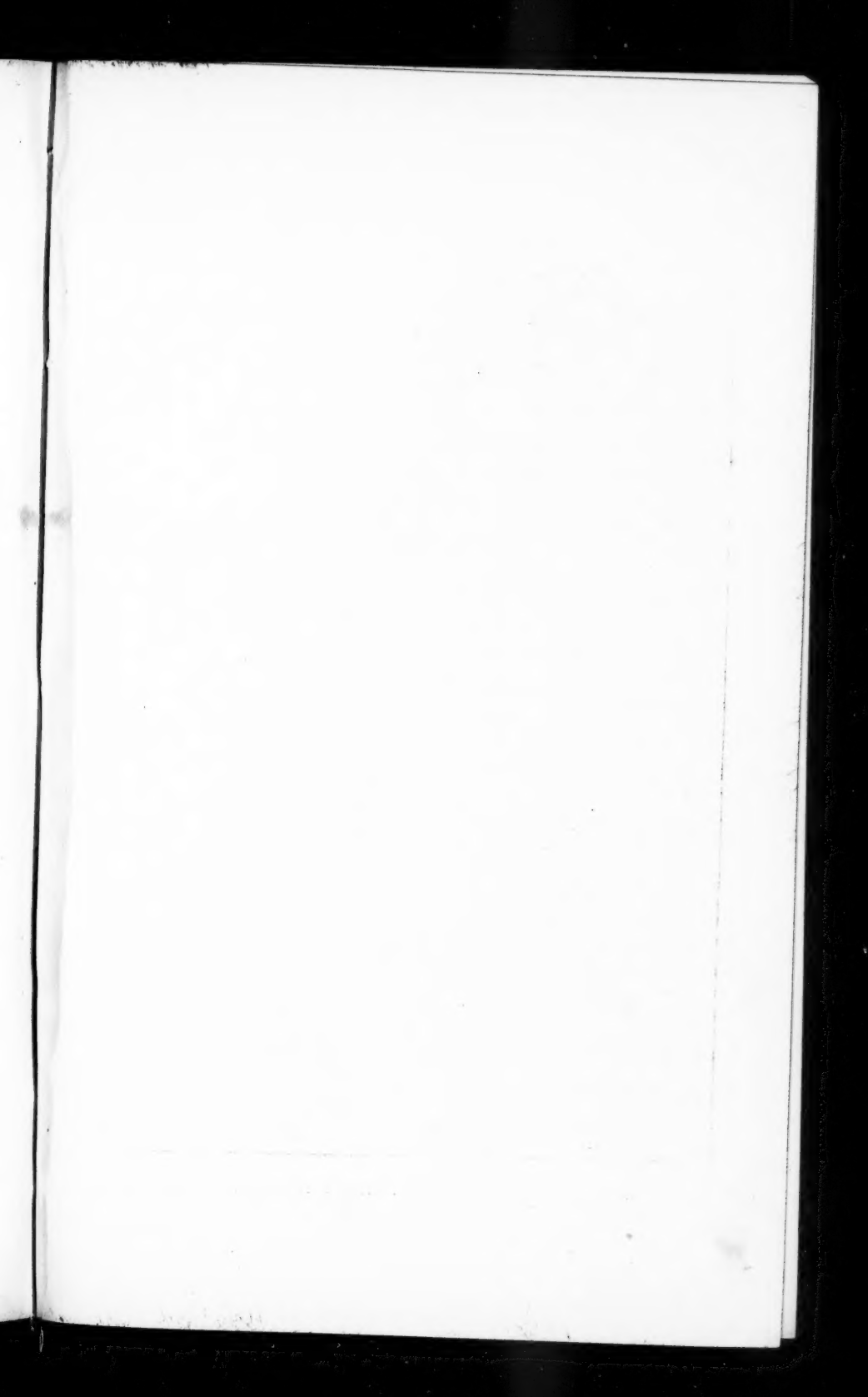
Rosy children dancing blithesome
Round a fair and happy mother;
Looks of love and health and merriment
 In glowing cheeks and eyes:
Then a message and a mission,
And a glad responsive heart-thrill,
Hope undaunted leaping forward
 To win the sailor's prize.

* * * * *
Barren regions, lone and cheerless,
Frozen waters, sunless heavens,
Cold intense and cruel frost-bites,
 Disease and spirits sore;
A disabled vessel, ice-bound
Midst the crushing "pack" and snow-drift;
A brave crew of luckless heroes
 Their homes shall know no more.

One last struggle for existence,
A bold march across the channel
In search of peopled land and help
 Before provisions fail.
Weary march! All bootless struggle!
Whitened shore-strewn bones attest it;
The sailor's prize is death; and none
 Is left to tell the tale.

EMMA RHODES.







"YOU DO NOT REMEMBER YOUR MOTHER?" SAID THE STRANGER INTERROGATIVELY.

